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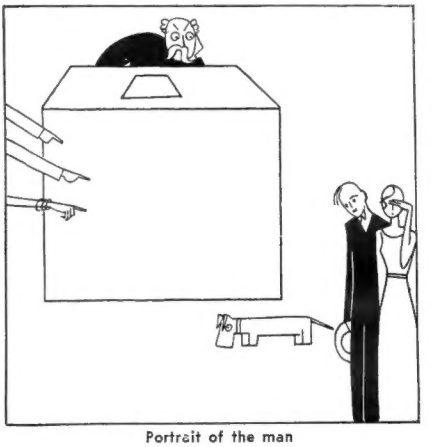

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The LUBBER

By BILL ADAMS

IT WAS not from choice that he went to sea; for there was no romance in him, no desire for adventure. It was merely that, just as the sea was the natural place for those with a touch of romance in them, so it was a sort of last resort for younger sons for whom there seemed to be no place upon the shore. His father was a farmer. The farm wasn't big enough to be divided between him and his elder brother. So he went to sea.

He joined the ship after dark on the night before she was to sail. When he entered the apprentices' halfdeck two old hands, Hallam and Cree, were playing cards, and a couple of other green hands were asleep in their bunks. Glancing round as he came over the door coaming, Cree exclaimed:

"Shivering tops'ls! Look what's here!"

Hallam took a look at the newcomer and winked at Cree. Then they went on with their game.

A green hand always did look funny, of course; but Pollock looked exceptionally so. He was stumpily built, with broad shoulders and clumsy hands that seemed too big for his short arms. His feet looked too big for his legs. His freckled face was large, with bulging blue eyes set somewhat close to his little squat nose.

Most green hands would have reddened at Cree's words and the winks that followed. But Pollock didn't redden at all. He sat down and, instead of staring about in the customary perplexed way of a new chum, leaned back on the bulkhead and looked straight before him with a stolid, disinterested expression, giving no evidence at all of any of the humility or wonder that the green hand usually shows. The two old hands paid no more attention to him, and after awhile he turned into his bunk and went to sleep.

The ship pulled out early in the morning. There was a fresh breeze and a choppy sea. What with seasickness, the strangeness of things, and being laughed at by every one, the other green hands were soon looking mighty miserable. But Pollock, who had never seen a ship till the previous evening, and was seasick as any one, retained something of his air of stolidity, apparently quite unaware that he was a laughing-stock. There was no sign of any humility in him. The old hands set him down for a thorough-going lubber, too dense for words.

By evening he was over his seasickness and, alone of the green hands, sat down to supper. It was when they questioned him after supper that Cree and Hallam discovered that he was a farmer.

They were vastly amused for, if one wished to insult anybody aboard a windjammer, to call him a farmer was the way to do so.

"What the devil did you come to sea for?" asked Hallam.

When at the end of his first day's disillusionment you ask a green hand what he came to sea for he invariably replies, very humbly, "I don't know."

But Pollock calmly answered—

"A fellow has to do something."

For a lubberly first voyager to refer to the sea as "something" struck the old hands as decidedly rich. Having long since gone through their own initiations, they were full of the pride that every right minded apprentice has in his profession; and were given to feeling sorry for any one not a sailor.

"You'll find you've tackled something, all right!" sneered Hallam.

In the ensuing weeks Pollock got along about as well as the average first voyager. Though no faster to learn than were the other new chums, he was not noticeably slower. But whereas they were keen to learn, interested in everything, he gave no sign of any interest or keenness. Whatever he did was done in a manner that seemed to say, "Since I'm here, I might as well."

The fact was that Pollock was proud of being a farmer and didn't care who knew it. That any one could be proud of being a farmer was beyond the understanding of his fellows. They hazed him a good deal at first; but since he took everything placidly, seeming to have no temper, they left him in peace after awhile and took their fun in a manner less direct. While, led on by them, he talked of cows and horses, pigs and crops, they listened with broad grins on their faces. A fellow without a solitary sailorly instinct, they dubbed him a lubber.

One evening when the ship had been a week or two at sea and had come down to the fine weather latitudes, the apprentices held a singsong in their half-deck, singing such old sea songs as "The Golden Vanity," "We'll Go No More A-Roving," and so forth. While the other green hands joined in the choruses, Pollock sat silent; and, after awhile, one of the old hands said—

"Come on, Pollock, let's hear you sing something!"

Chancing to pass by while Pollock was singing, the mate paused to listen.

"That's a hell of a song for a sailor!" he muttered.

And, young and old, the other apprentices roared with laughter at his song:

"Tam Pearce, Tam Pearce, lend me t'owld gray mare,
All along, down along, by a long lane,
For I want to go to Widdecombe fair,
Long 'o Sam Stewer, Bill Brewer, Peter Gurney, Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawke,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh an' all—"

When he had gotten that far Pollock was interrupted by Hallam's exclaiming—

"Oh, for heaven's sake, dry up!"

Then, while the others continued their singsong, he went out and sat alone on a hatch.

Pollock didn't try to shirk his work any more than does the average apprentice and didn't try to get more than his fair share of the grub. So, since there was nothing precisely objectionable about him, the others soon took to leaving him alone. He was merely a born lubber, and that was the whole story. But after awhile something happened that made them place him in a scale lower than that of the lubber plain and simple.

THE ship was well down in the South Atlantic when, one day, the order was given to furl the foresail. As soon as the big sail was hauled up, the mate sang out:

"Aloft and furl it! Sailors to windward! Farmers to leeward!"

A mate often added those last words to his order to furl a heavy sail. They acted as a spur to every one's pride, sent everybody rushing for the rigging; each man determined to get out to windward where the work was hardest and called for more sailorly skill.

When the mate gave the order, Pollock was nearest of any one to the rigging, and so was in a position to be the first to start aloft, first to reach the sail. And, with nothing to prevent him from going to windward, he went calmly down to lee! And when the sail was furled and the crowd down from aloft,

he replied to the gibes of his fellow apprentices with—

"Well, the mate said farmers to leeward, didn't he?"

Not a particle of shame in him, not an atom of sailorly pride!

When the same order was given on later occasions Pollock went to windward when the chance came his way; and though he did so without any zest, as if it were a mere matter of have-to and not at all a matter of pride, the others, sailors being by nature easygoing, forgot his first dereliction and accepted him as more or less one of themselves again. They looked on him as a lubber, of course; but his being a lubber was of no great consequence. It was just his luck, poor devil! As long as he behaved in a manner even halfway sailorly, they were willing to bear with him.

The ship made a good run to and around the Horn and on up the Pacific. It began to look as if she might make a record passage. And then, one evening when the trade wind was beginning to show signs of dying, the booby birds appeared and, as dusk fell, settled on the spars to roost.

If a man cares to do so, he can go aloft and set a hand upon a booby without its making any attempt to fly away. It merely turns its head and looks at him from silly, slightly inquiring eyes. No sailor ever bothers them. If ever a man catches one he does so solely for amusement, and soon releases it.

Unnoticed by any one, Pollock went aloft and caught and killed a booby. When he brought it to the hatch where the other apprentices were sitting and Hallam asked him why he'd killed it, he replied that he was going to skin it and take its skin home to his sister. No one said anything. It was merely one more example of his lubberliness, of the fundamental difference between him and his fellows. But while he was skinning the bird the mate's whistle blew, and the order was given to brace the yards up. The trade wind was gone, and a new wind was coming.

"If you've brought us a head wind, look out for yourself," warned Cree.

They braced the yards, and Pollock returned to finish skinning the booby. He had scarcely picked it up when the mate's whistle blew once more, and once more the order came to brace the yards up. The wind had hauled ahead. The ship was far off her course. When the yards were jammed hard up and the ropes coiled, Cree flung the dead bird to the sea and turned on Pollock savagely. But Hallam said:

"Hold on! Don't kick the lubber! We'll put him in Coventry."

If you want to make a man's life miserable in a windjammer, to put him in Coventry is the way to do it. No one speaks to him. He asks a question, and no one replies. Utterly ignored by his fellows, he dwells alone, an outcast. Toward the end of a long passage every sailor yearns for company other than that of the few men with whom he has lived in close intimacy for many months. Yet rob him of their stale companionship and it cuts to the very soul.

For a week the ship tacked to and fro in little baffling airs, and no one spoke to Pollock. He was utterly cast out; and how much he felt it no one knew or cared. And then the wind hauled fair and, sailor fashion, they forgot the ill luck he had brought them. Released from Coventry, he was permitted to be one of them again. He gave no sign of gladness, said never a word of apology. A queer fish, they dubbed him; a lubber not worth bothering about.

And it was not until the ship was well upon her homeward voyage that something came to set him down definitely and forever as one of a breed that was not their breed—to make them scorn him utterly.

The other apprentices were sitting in the halfdeck one evening. Pollock was alone upon the deck outside. It was his next turn at the wheel, and he was waiting for the bell to strike and call him to it. His comrades were voicing their ambitions, talking of the longed-for day when each of them should be the skipper of some fine ship. And while they were talking Pollock entered to fetch the mittens he'd forgotten.

"Pollock, what'd you do," asked Cree, "if you were skipper of a liner and your ship were sinking?"

"I'd jolly well save my skin," Pollock instantly replied.

The bells struck as he spoke, and he

hurried away to the wheel.

"We'd all save our skins if we could do so decently, I suppose," said Hallam. "If a man's done everything possible, got all his passengers and crew away, and isn't to blame, there's no sense in dying."

There was a minute of thoughtful silence. Then Cree spoke.

"I'd not care to be a passenger in any ship that Pollock was skipper of," said he.

"Nor I," said another; and all of them agreed.

For the rest of the voyage they all looked on Pollock as a low sort of cur without a particle of common sailorly decency anywhere in him. They proffered him no friendship whatever.

HALLAM told me Pollock's story, and I'll give you the rest of it just as he gave it to me.

Cree and I were out of our apprenticeships [Hallam said] when the ship came in. We left her, and a few days later took our exams for our second mate's tickets. Cree passed all right, but I failed; and so had to go back to sea for twelve months before I could try again. I made a hash of things upon my second try, and it wasn't till I'd been two years out of my apprenticeship that at last I obtained my second mate's ticket. Cree by that time had his master's ticket, and I'd lost track of him. When I ran across him again he was master of a passenger liner, while I had only just managed to get my mate's ticket.

You know how it is when a man's been a long while getting his tickets? No one wants him. It's very difficult to find a berth. And it was lucky for me that I ran across Cree as I did. He took me on as his mate, and I sailed with him for a number of voyages. Every once in awhile I'd try for my master's ticket, but it was no good. Like lots of others, I always became rattled in the exam room, and after a time I just about made up my mind that I'd never be anything more than a mate.

I'd been with Cree about three years when we came into port to find that the ship had been sold. He was given command of another ship owned by the company, but I was out of a billet. I wandered about the docks for some weeks, trying in vain to find a skipper who'd sign me on. My record of failures in the exam room was against me.

On the day before Cree was to take out his new command, I visited him. We were sitting in his cabin, talking of our apprentice days, when he mentioned Pollock.

"Well," said I, "there's one fellow who was even a bigger fool than myself."

And I'd hardly said the words when the devil of a smell arose. A cattle boat was passing through the dock, and a filthy brute she was, reeking and stained from stem to stern. I was turning away when Cree grasped my arm.

"Look, Hallam!" he cried. "Look who's on her bridge!"

And, looking, I saw a short, broad shouldered fellow with a freckled face, his two huge hands resting on her bridge rail. He wasn't over a hundred feet from us. There was no mistaking him. And by the lordly air of him you'd have supposed that he was skipper of a crack liner, with lords and ladies in his passenger list.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Cree laughed. "He landed in just the right place, didn't he?"

Pollock hadn't seen us. We could have called to him, but we didn't. We weren't interested in him. And for my part, being only a mate, and out of a berth at that, I was feeling a bit jealous, although his command was only a stinking old cattle boat. Soon after she was gone I said goodby to Cree and went ashore to continue my search for a berth.

Several days passed. I was beginning to feel pretty desperate when all of a sudden I remembered Pollock and his dirty old tub. It occurred to me that he might be wanting a mate. I winced at the thought of sailing under him; didn't fancy the superior airs he would be able to put on. But out of sheer necessity I swallowed my pride and looked up his ship. Her cattle had been discharged, of course, and she had been drydocked, cleaned and painted. But you could still smell her all over her dock. I went aboard and made for her skipper's cabin. The door was open, and just within it sat Pollock. He stared at

me for a jiffy, then jumped up and grasped my hand.

"Hello, Hallam!" he cried, friendly as pie; he drew me in, made me sit down and called a steward to bring drinks.

I was in shore clothes, of course, and I guessed right away that he supposed I was also a skipper. I guessed right, for as soon as the steward was gone he asked—

"Where's your ship?"

Expecting to see derision come to those big eyes of his, I had to admit that I was only a mate, and out of a berth at that. But instead of riding the high horse he leaned over and clapped me on the shoulder.

"That's great!" he exclaimed. "By gad, that's great, Hallam! I've got a dandy ship here, and my mate's just left me."

He took it for granted that I'd jump at the berth; and when, scarcely able to refrain from laughing at his calling his old tub a dandy ship, I did accept his offer he was delightful.

It was soon evident that Pollock hadn't changed at all. Skipper though he was, he was still a farmer. Right away he began telling me what a fine lot of cattle he'd just brought in. To hear him you'd have thought that the skipper of a cattle boat was the most important man on all the sea; that carrying cattle was a sailor's highest honor.

"And do you know," he said, "I didn't lose a single animal last voyage! Not one. I brought in every beast I went to sea with."

Then his face fell, and he went to talking of other voyages he had made.

"It's awful sometimes in bad weather," he said. "It hits a man hard when he has to see some poor hurt beast hoisted out and dropped overboard."

Speaking of cattle, he was serious as another skipper would have been had he been speaking of passengers.

Well, I signed on with him and we went to sea. There were no cattle on the outward run, of course, and Pollock was a mighty dull fellow. He seemed always to be bored. Even when we ran into bad weather he took things in a disinterested sort of way. But he was at all times very decent to me and treated me as if I were his equal instead of only his mate. When we came to fine latitudes he just about left the ship to me, often not coming to the bridge for days at a time.

"Look after her, Hallam," he'd say. "You know as much about it as I do."

But for the homeward run we loaded four hundred fat steers; and from the minute the first of them came aboard he was altogether different. He was master and I was mate then, and no mistake. Fussy as the devil, he was; forever watching the barometer and the sky for any sign of bad weather; coming up to the bridge at all hours of the day and night.

A few days after we sailed he happened to be on the bridge when the cattle tenders were throwing the beasts their hay. One of them, a big burly ruffian who must have weighed fully fifty pounds more than Pollock, struck a hungry steer on the nose with his huge fist. Pollock was off the bridge and down the ladder in a flash and, before I knew what he was up to, had the man by the throat.

"Let me ever see you lay a hand on one of my beasts again, and, by the Lord, I'll fix you!" he shouted, as he flung the bruised offender from him.

Then, white with anger still, he returned to me on the bridge.

"Hallam, I'm master of this ship," he cried, "and let no man forget it!"

YOU know how the skipper of a passenger liner makes the rounds every day, how he inspects everything, accompanied by his mate, chief engineer, purser and doctor. We had no doctor, of course, and no purser. But every morning the chief engineer and I had to show up sharp at eleven o'clock and be there to make the rounds with Pollock. He didn't bother about inspecting anything but the cattle, though, and them he inspected thoroughly. If a beast had a broken horn, a lame leg, a skinned knee, a bit of hide missing anywhere, he spotted it at once; and heaven help the cattle tender who couldn't tell him just how whatever was amiss had happened!

We made a fine weather passage and came in without having lost any beasts. They were fat and sleek. And once they

were discharged Pollock was a different man again. Good-natured with every one, easygoing as a man can be.

The ship was almost ready for sea again when Pollock came to me one morning where I was watching the loading of the last of the cargo.

"Great news, Hallam!" said he, and it was easy to see how excited he was.

I supposed the owners had given him, and perhaps me too, a raise in wages; but no such thing! It was merely that we were going to take out a stallion with us—a valuable thoroughbred for which some wealthy man had paid a big price.

"He's a beauty," said Pollock. "Just wait till you see him!"

And away he went to supervise the building of a stall on the forward well-deck.

It was an enormous animal, that stallion. I had no idea that a horse could be so big. Pollock told me that it weighed twenty-three hundred pounds. A great jet-black creature with four white feet, a wide white star in the center of its forehead, and a thick wavy mane and tail. Its coat was glossy as silk. Long silky hair hung down about its fetlocks. A couple of grooms, who were to care for it on the voyage, brought it down to the dock.

Those groom fellows couldn't get the animal on to the gangway. It reared, snorted, laid its ears back, bared its teeth and lashed out its huge heels with a devilish look in its eyes. Pollock ran down the gangway, pushed the grooms aside, grasped the halter rope and spoke to the beast. Instantly quiet, it followed him over the gangway like a dog and into its stall. He closed the door himself, opened a bale of hay and fed it. You'd have supposed that he was a groom instead of skipper of the ship!

We weighed anchor soon after the horse came aboard. It was Summer, and the sea was windless and smooth. And do you suppose that those grooms ever fed the horse? Not they! Pollock wouldn't allow them near it. Morning, noon and night, he took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and went down to the well-deck. And while the great stallion was feeding he'd go into its stall and talk to it, curry it and comb out its mane and tail. One by one he'd lift its iron-shod feet and comb out the long hair about its fetlocks. One kick, and he'd have been smashed flat. But it never paid the least attention to him. During the day he'd stand on the bridge for hours, looking admiringly down at it. And often he'd come from his cabin at night and go into its stall and talk to it, barefoot in his pajamas.

The stallion very soon began to look for him. You'd see it stretch its splendid neck over the stall door, and hear it whinny. But no one else in the ship could go near it. Let any man do so, and back went its ears, and its teeth were bared.

A week or so after we went to sea we ran into a bit of a blow, and the ship started to tumble about. Pollock was all ready. He'd been watching the barometer and keeping a sharp lookout on the weather; in preparation for the storm he'd had a stout canvas belt rigged to the under side of the roof of the stall.

As soon as the sea began to make he went into the stall and adjusted the belt under the stallion's belly, buckled it and gave orders to hoist till the four hoofs were just clear of the deck. And while the animal was slowly lifted he stood beside it with a hand on its neck and talked to it in just about the tone a little girl uses when talking to her doll. Its trust in him absolute, it never so much as quivered. I supposed that as soon as it was safely slung he'd come back to the bridge. But he called up to me—

"Take care of the ship, Mr. Hallam." Then he closed the stall door, shutting himself in with the horse.

Starting at evening, the blow lasted all night; and all night Pollock remained shut in with the stallion while the ship pitched and rolled to a high sea. Just after daybreak the wind eased suddenly, and the sea fell almost flat. There was still no sign of Pollock and, afraid that something had happened, I went down to the well-deck and looked through a knothole in the side of the stall.

There was the skipper, lying asleep in the manger with the stallion's great head above him. It smelled or heard me, for back went its ears and up went its lip, baring its teeth. I returned to the bridge. An hour or so later out came the skipper, with his uniform all wrink-

led, wisps of hay stuck to his coat, and bits of hay in his hair.

A memory of our apprentice days came to me at sight of him. I remembered the mate's order, the booby bird and those words of his that at last had made us all so despise him. And I found myself despising him again—despising him as a lubber, as one not of my own breed, as a sort of mongrel outcast who by right had no place at all among us people of the sea. I suppose that the crew became aware of my feelings and took their cue from me. I don't know. All I know is that from that day on all hands took to laughing at Pollock behind his back.

THUS things went along till we were a few days' run from our port of destination, with me and the second mate, the deck hands, the stokers, the engineers, all having no end of fun about "lubber Pollock" as every one called him; and Pollock quite unaware of the fact that he was a laughing-stock in his own ship.

And then one night I was awakened by a heavy jar, and next moment heard the engine room telegraph ring and the engines stop. I was out of my bunk in a jiffy and on the bridge. Pollock was there ahead of me, and I heard him ask the second mate—

"What is it, Mister?"

And the Second repled:

"I don't know, sir. She struck something."

The night was dark, with the moon just rising behind masses of tumbled clouds. There was a moaning, as of wind approaching from far off. For a few moments Pollock and the second and I stood staring into the gloom. And then, as a glimmer of moonlight silvered the sea, the second cried:

"On the port beam, sir! A derelict!"

And I made out a hulk on the sea, a short distance away. A sailing ship, with her masts all gone and her boom broken short off. She was lifting and dipping to a rising swell; and as she lifted and dipped her broken boom alternately vanished under and rose from the sea. And at the instant that I saw her the carpenter came running to the bridge.

"She's holed, sir. She's taking water fast," he reported to Pollock.

That broken boom end had gone through our plates below the waterline.

That the ship was doomed was very soon evident. Water was entering her faster than the pumps could take it out. We were going to have to abandon her, but there was no immediate hurry.

"Get the boats into the water, Mister," Pollock ordered the second mate. "See that they're provisioned. No need to get excited. There'll be plenty of time."

Quite calm, he was. And as he spoke a heavy rain began and a sharp squall blew up. The sea suddenly rose higher.

Then, while engineers, cooks, stewards, sailors and stokers busied themselves getting the boats into the water, Pollock left me and went down to the well-deck. I couldn't see him at first, but presently the rain thinned and the moon broke clear, and I saw him plainly. The stallion was stretching its neck over the stall door and Pollock was rubbing its nose; although I couldn't hear him I knew that he was talking to it. In the clear moonlight I could just make out the loom of high land far away.

I knew, of course, that the stallion was doomed. Had the sea been smooth and had it been daylight, it might perhaps have been possible for it to swim ashore, towed by one of the boats. But even could it swim to the shore, I knew that the coast was all rock fringed and murderous, and that no living thing could land on it in rough weather.

The seas were getting momentarily rougher, so that for a boat to tow the animal would be impossible in any case. The boats would be well loaded too, and would have plenty to do in taking care of themselves; and certainly they must keep well away from that rock fringed coast. The poor brute would have to be left to itself, to swim in the dark, rough sea till it drowned. I saw its great shoulders strain to the lurch of the slowly settling ship, and I heard Pollock say—

"Steady, lad! Steady!"

And then it came to me what he was going to do. I knew that he was going to shoot it, to save it from a slow death in the dark cold sea. And I knew that he was delaying the moment as long as

he could.

In a little while the second mate came to the bridge to report that both the boats were in the water. I called to Pollock then and told him that all was ready. He called back:

"All right, Mister! Get every one off her!"

There was still no immediate hurry, but it was time to be going. I saw the second mate and his men into their boat and away. Pollock would be in my boat, so I went to him and said—

"We're waiting for you, sir."

He didn't hear me at first. He was undoing the heavy bars that held the stall door closed. I repeated my words, and he turned to me.

"All right, Hallam, get away," he answered.

"We're waiting for you, sir," I said again.

He turned to me abruptly then and said:

"I told you to get away. You'd better hurry, Hallam. She'll soon be gone."

Then he led the stallion from its stall and, fascinated, I stayed to see him shoot the poor brute. But there was no pistol in his hand, and he made no motion to take one from his pocket if one was there. And then of a sudden I realized that he was going to let the horse swim, going to give it that pitiful, hopeless chance for its life.

The ship was getting low in the water, and still Pollock stood stroking the stallion's face and talking to it in low tones. It was hurting him to leave the poor brute, I knew. So I took his arm and said:

"Come along, Pollock, old man. You can't do anything for it."

Pollock shook my hand away.

"Obey orders, Hallam! Get gone!"

In his voice there was the same sternness of the day when he'd said to me, "I'm master of this ship, Hallam. Let no man forget it!" By now the water was lapping up to the well-deck, beginning to bubble in at the scupper holes.

"Come on, Pollock!" I cried.

He replied, very calmly, very sternly—

"Hallam, get your men away at once!"

So, thinking that he'd follow me, I ran for my boat. My men were in her, waiting for me and Pollock. I turned at the rail, expecting to see him come. But he was still on the well-deck with the stallion. I shouted, and he merely waved a hand, gesturing me to be gone. So, lest my boat be swamped, I leaped into her; and, after waiting a few seconds to give him a chance to come, bade the men pull clear. Even now I did not realize what he was up to.

The moon was well up now, shining full on the ship. We could see Pollock and the stallion plainly. We could see the white star on its forehead, the sheen of its glossy coat. The water was flowing over the well-deck. The wind whined shrilly, and spray was beginning to fly.

And now we saw Pollock take off his clothes and stand naked in the cold light with the stallion's halter rope in one hand. He was going to swim with it, going to try to guide it shoreward! I knew he had no chance at all. No one spoke. We just sat, staring.

And as a cloud covered the moon and a squall whipped over the sea we lost them. The wind roared. The spray flew. The night was all gloom. And when presently the moon broke clear again, the ship was gone. I turned my boat about then and bade my men give way, steering for where she had been. Soon I saw a great black head and, close to it, between it and me, a man swimming. Once more I heard Pollock call, "Steady, lad! Steady!" I shouted to him to leave the animal to its fate and come to the boat, but he paid no heed.

And then the moon went under once more, and I must needs fetch my boat's head to the sea lest she be swamped, and could no longer seek him. But it was still possible for him to seek me. I shouted to him again and again. There was no answer. Only the wind, the lash of spray, the uproar of the sea. I set out a sea anchor, hung a bag of oil over the boat's bow and shouted on and on. And all my men shouted with me.

Till the east grew gray for dawn we shouted. And soon after dawn a steamer came and picked both boats up just in time; for the wind was still rising, and the sea growing ever rougher. We looked from the steamer's deck across the wild sea and saw only the whitecaps blowing high and a few gulls flying.

The SHOWDOWN

By W. C. TUTTLE

IT WAS one of those miserable, drizzling mornings. All night the rain had fallen; inside the old stable the dirt floor was mucky. Water trickled through the sagging roof, and a stream of it splattered off the wet and flopping sombrero of a little man who, seated on a rickety box, was trying to milk a wild cow, which was literally tied hand and foot.

Ropes ran in every conceivable direction from the animal's head and legs, rendering her *hors de combat* as far as movement was concerned, although she could turn her head and stare malevolently at the man. There was no milk in the battered pail; and as far as that particular cow was concerned, there would never be any milk in the pail.

The man was speaking in a dreary monotone, damning everything and everybody, his discourse filled with unprintable adjectives and nouns. He got up, kicked the cow in the ribs, slapped the water off his hat against her rump and sat down dejectedly, staring at the empty pail.

"Damn 'em all!" he said wearily. "I'm jist about to the end of my rope. They don't want milk. Them jiggers wouldn't be caught in hell with a glass of milk. All they want to do is make it tough for me."

He stood up and punted the pail the length of the stable, untied the cow, which proceeded to catch him at the doorway and knock him sprawling in the mud. She hooked wickedly at him in passing, but missed and went galloping around a corral fence and headed for the open range. The little man got to his feet and began pawing the mud off his clothes.

A big, hulking man, protected by a yellow slicker, came down from the tumbledown old ranch-house. He stopped and looked at the little man who was pawing at his muddy clothes.

"Where's the milk, Shep?" the big man asked harshly.

Shep Thomas stopped pawing long enough to look at Ed Faber.

"Ain't no milk, Ed," he said wearily. "Cow wouldn't give it up."

"Red will be sore as hell."

Shep shrugged his shoulders.

"He—he'll have to be sore, I reckon. I done my best. Say, Ed—" Shep's voice had a spunky ring—"when the hell did Red Taylor git such a hankerin' for milk?"

"You better ask him," replied Faber.

"Go and saddle that blue roan for me. Git a move on you!"

Bowing his head to the inevitable, Shep Thomas sloshed over to the stable, where he saddled Faber's horse while Faber, a sneering grin on his face, looked on.

"Tighten that cinch," he ordered. "Pull it tight, damn you!"

"Damn bronc blows hisself up," wailed Shep.

"Oh, hell!" Faber cuffed Shep aside and tightened the cinch.

Then he led the animal outside, swung into the saddle and rode toward Washout. Shep Thomas knew why Ed Faber was going to Washout. Last night Ed Faber, Red Taylor, Dutch Nolan and Tex Reel had blown the vault of the Cattlemen's Bank at Washout; and Faber was going to town to see what was being done about it.

Shep Thomas knew all about this robbery, knew all their plans, and he knew where they had hidden the measly five thousand in currency they had gotten from the vault. Faber was the one who had planned it. Faber had served an apprenticeship at safe blowing before becoming a dweller of the open ranges; and his theory was that the law would never expect cowboys to blow a safe. Red Taylor had wanted to ride in, stick up the bank and take what they could; but Nolan and Reel had sided with Faber.

Shep wouldn't get any cut of this money. He understood that. Fate had given Shep Thomas, known locally as Jim Harris, a very bad deal. It happened that Dutch Nolan had known Shep several years ago; knew that Shep had been sent to the penitentiary for alleged cattle stealing and shooting an officer. He also knew that Shep had escaped.

Shep was no angel. All his life he had skidded close to the curb of the law; but he was innocent of this specific charge. In fact, he suspected that Dutch Nolan either had a hand in that job, or knew who did. However, the law did not known what became of Shep after he declined to accept further hospitality from the State of Oklahoma.

Shep was forty, looked sixty, with red rimmed eyes in a peaked, little face, and a scrawny neck. He was a small man—but how he could play poker! With his size and appearance, life to him was all bluff. After his escape a few dollars staked him, and in a few weeks he had amassed enough coin of the realm to buy out the poverty stricken Rafter A brand. Poker and privation gave him a start in the cattle business.

Shep was really ambitious. He wanted to raise blooded stuff; so he borrowed five thousand from the Cattlemen's Bank for one year. Unfortunately, no one wanted to play poker with Shep; his luck went bad; and when the year was up the bank took over his two hundred head of cattle, leaving him a few mangy cows, one of which he had tried to milk that morning.

They showed him a paper which, they said, showed that the sale of the cattle grossed an even five thousand dollars. They forgave him the freight and handling charges and called it square. But Shep knew cattle and weights, and he knew that those steers were worth, even at starvation figures, ten thousand dollars. But the bank was powerful—and Shep wasn't.

THEN to add to Shep's woes, Dutch Nolan and his three companions, fresh from a stickup job in New Mexico, discovered poor little Shep Thomas. Moving in on him, they lived a life of ease while planning to smash the bank at Washout. Shep didn't dare say a word. Dutch told him that he would either play the game their way, or he would be turned over to the sheriff.

Shep was unarmed; they had seen to that. For more than two weeks he had been their slave. Cooking, washing, attending to their every wish—knocked down, of course, if he didn't—he had suffered for over two weeks. They had circulated the report that they were old friends of Shep's, who were planning to stock the Rafter A and go into business with the present owner.

To add injury to insult, Red Taylor had thrown a half filled can of condensed milk at Shep's head and demanded fresh milk. He was either going to have milk fresh from the cow, or he was going to tie Shep's arms and legs in hard knots.

Red had manhandled Shep so many times that Shep really tried to milk that range cow, much to the amusement of the four men.

Shep was standing in the doorway of the stable, afraid to go and tell Red that the dairy idea had failed to work out, when Red came down across the muddy yard. He was swathed in a slicker. Red was the biggest of the four men, and he had huge, hairy hands. Shep was not without nerve, but those hands made him cringe.

"Where's my milk?" Red demanded.

"Honest, Red, I couldn't milk that there cow," wailed Shep. "She wasn't no milker. Dryer'n a bone, she was—honest. I—I tried. Look at me, Red. She butted me into the mud. Aw-w-w-w, I did try."

"You poor little pack-rat," sneered Red. "Listen t' me, Shep. One more whine out of you and I'll sink you in the crick. Wipe the tears out of your damn eyes. The sheriff and his men will be out here before long unless I'm mistaken. We'll all be watchin' you; and the first bleat you make we'll drill you full of holes!"

"Honest, Red," said Shep, "I won't tell anythin'. I'm no fool. They'd take me along."

"I'm jist tellin' you what'll happen."

"I won't yelp. Don't jump on to me thataway, Red. Ain't I done right by you boys? Why, I ain't even been to town for two weeks, until yesterday. I've been cookin', washin', lyin'; doin' everythin' I can for you. I won't yelp."

"See that you don't. They can't pin this deal on us if you don't squeal. That lousy bank! Five thousand dollars! I'd like to ride in there and shoot up the damn place!"

"They give me a dirty deal," sighed Shep.

"All the more reason for you keepin' your damn mouth shut."

"They owe me five thousand dollars."

Red went back to the house. The rain had ceased, and the sun broke through. Shep sloshed over to the corral fence. He could see some one looking through a window. One of those four watched him all the time. The men were nervous today. Ed Faber had ridden the three miles to Washout, ostensibly to get the mail, a few groceries and to see what was being done about the robbery.

Shep was sitting on the corral fence alone, humped like an old buzzard, when Ed Faber rode in. Faber was tall, thin, grim faced. He had killed a man down in the Panhandle and had left Texas in a hurry. He flung his reins to Shep and strode to the house.

Red, Tex and Dutch waited for him on the porch, but he led them inside the main room of the ranch-house.

"Well?" growled Red. "Spit it out, Ed!"

"They ain't doin' a damn thing—not openly," said Faber.

"You mean, they—the town don't know it?" asked Red.

"I seen the sheriff come out of the bank," said Faber grimly. "He went to his office. That's all. Not a damn soul mentioned that the vault had been cracked."

The men looked at one another, puzzled. Ed Faber reached in his pocket and drew out an envelop which had already been opened. He flung it on the table and stepped back.

"Take a look at that, will you?" he said tensely.

Red picked up the letter. It was addressed to Jim Harris, the name Shep Thomas was known by in that country. It had been mailed at the Washout post office.

"I opened it," said Faber.

Red drew out the enclosure, a single sheet on which had been printed in crude letters:

ONE OF YUR MEN IS A PINK. LOOK OUT FOR MARKED MUNNY.

—A FREND

"A Pink!" snorted Red Taylor. "Who the hell's he talkin' about?"

Pinkerton detectives, known as Pinks, had become a menace to lawbreakers in the range countries, and the name was synonymous with danger. Posing as toughs, worming their way into organized gangs, taking a year or more if necessary, they played what seemed to be a square game with their outlaw brothers, only to send them all to the gallows or the penitentiary.

THE four men regarded one another with grim eyes. Not one was sure of the other. The money was undivided, buried. They had voted to keep it buried until all danger was past. Keeping his eyes on the other three, Red stepped over to the door, flung it open and yelled to Shep.

He came in a few moments, slouching along. Red grasped him by the arm and flung him around against a table. Then he thrust the paper under his nose.

"Who's your friend in Washout?" demanded Red. "Damn you, don't lie to me! Read that note and tell me who wrote it."

"Leggo me!" wailed Shep. "You're hurtin' my arm, you big goriller."

"Let go of him," demanded Tex. "Don't hurt the little shrimp."

"What's it to you what I do?" snarled Red, but he released Shep.

"Read it, Shep," said Faber. "You ort to know who it's from."

"What does it say?" asked Shep.

"Can'tcha read?" asked Tex.

Red snatched it out of his hands and read it aloud.

"Now, who wrote it?" he growled. "Who's your friend?"

"Didn't he hang no name on to it?" asked Shep.

"Oh, hell!" snorted Tex. He backed up a little and leaned against the wall. "So one of us is a Pink, eh? That's why the sheriff and his deputies ain't movin' fast, eh? A damn dirty Pink!"

"You ain't proved nothin' yet," drawled Faber. "Pinks and marked money. That's why they only had five thousand in their damn vault."

"You didn't happen to *know* that, didja?" asked Dutch.

Faber ignored him. A spark would cause an explosion now. All four men were keyed up for a killing. Only little Shep was exempt as a suspect.

"Did that there note say somebody around here was a detective?" asked Shep. "Hell, that makes it nice for me!"

"Shut up, you damn little snake!" snapped Red. His lips were a white line as he leaned back and looked at the others.

"One of us is a dirty sneak," he said slowly, "and that money is marked."

"Are you showin' a clean shirt, Red?" queried Ed Faber. "Jist remember, we don't know you any better than you know us."

"Teamin' up on me, are you?" said Red. "Speak for yourself, Faber; you don't know Dutch and Tex any better than you know me."

"Don't you try to put any deadwood on me," warned Tex.

"The deadwood is on every man until we know better," declared Dutch. "Red, you keep your hand away from your holster. Don't go off half cocked—unless you're scared."

"Scared? Me?" sneered Red. "And, damn you, Dutch—"

"Stop it!" snapped Faber. "While we're quarrelin', the sheriff might be outside. I'm for hightailin' it out of here—*pronto*."

Red sneered at Faber.

"I don't reckon *you* give a damn about us diggin' the sneak out of the gang. Faber, all along I've—"

"Yea-a-ah?" drawled Faber. "Well, Red, if you want it, take it!"

Both men were lightning on the draw, both keyed to the highest pitch. Only six feet apart, their guns crashed as one. As Faber was falling, Red tried to keep his feet, tried to pump more lead into the already dying Faber, but his trigger finger was nerveless. His knees buckled and he pitched toward Shep, who squealed and fended him aside with his open hand.

Tex leaned against the wall, white faced, staring at Dutch.

"What are you starin' at me for?" asked Dutch huskily.

"I've knowed Faber for years," said Tex. "Red Taylor came out of the Oklahoma Penitentiary two weeks before he joined us. You damn fool, neither of them was Pinks."

Dutch stared at Tex, the color drained from his face. He knew what Tex meant.

"I had to leave the Panhandle," said Tex. "Damn you, Dutch, was you follerin' me?"

Dutch knew there was no time to frame a denial. Tex's hand flashed to his holster, but Dutch was ready. Shep fell flat on the floor as the two guns flashed and thundered. Dutch jerked back against the wall, a blank expression

on his face. Dutch's second bullet struck Tex in the shoulder, whirling him sidewise. He fell to his knees, got back to his feet and went staggering out on the porch.

Dutch was down against the wall. Shep got to his feet quickly. He heard voices in the yard; then a sharp order. He stepped out on the porch, blinking foolishly in the bright sunlight. Two men had Tex by the arms, trying to hold him up, while another came up the steps.

It was Charley Strange, the sheriff, and his two deputies.

"What the hell is wrong around here?" he asked Shep.

Shep leaned against a porch post and licked his dry lips.

"I—I dunno," he lied. "The four of 'em got into a quarrel and started throwin' lead. It shore was awful. Come in here and take a look, Sheriff."

"This feller is a goner," called one of the deputies.

"Leave him there and come on in."

They stood around in the smoky room and looked at the havoc. Dutch was still alive, but he knew he was dying.

"C'mere," he said in a husky whisper. "I've gotta tell somethin'."

"Tell me all about it," said the sheriff, kneeling down beside him.

Dutch's dimming eyes saw the badge on the sheriff's vest, and he shut his jaw tightly for a moment.

"Can't you talk?" asked the sheriff. "What was the trouble?"

"Go to hell!" whispered Dutch. "But—listen—will you? If you ever see Shep Thomas — tell him — he — was framed. I—I—stole them cows in Oklahoma, and I—I—shot—that—deputy. Shep wasn't—guilty."

"Shep Thomas," muttered the sheriff. "I dunno any Shep Thomas."

"Well, you won't git anythin' more out of this *hombre,*" said one of the deputies.

THE sheriff got to his feet, shaking his head as he turned to Shep.

"Harris, the Cattlemens' Bank was robbed last night. They blew the vault and got away with five thousand dollars."

"Who did?" asked Shep.

"We don't know. Prob'ly some safe busters driftin' through the country; but we're kinda checkin' up on folks. Don't look like a job that cowhands would pull off. But—" the sheriff shoved his hat back on his head and scratched his nose—"I'd like to know why these four men shot each other up thisaway."

"They never had no quarrels before," said Shep. "They've been a-livin' here with me. In fact, they was goin' to stock this here ranch. But—well, I dunno. I come in there about the time that them two over there smoked each other. And then the other two was a-lookin' at each other, kinda darin' each other to start; and then they started. Me? I was flat on the floor huggin' the rug."

"Well," decided the sheriff, "I reckon we'll borry your team and wagon to haul 'em to town."

"You bet you can. Gosh, that shore was a cleanup. Jist kinda *bing-bang-boom!* and all four of 'em was angels. Not one left to tell why it was done."

They went down to the stable, where Shep harnessed the wagon team.

"You know," remarked Shep, "them fellers was goin' to start stockin' this here ranch right away."

"Makes it kinda tough on you," said the sheriff.

"I've had it plenty tough. But—" Shep looked at the sheriff, a twinkle in his little red eyes—"all three of 'em thought they knowed more about the grand old American game than I did; so I ain't so bad off. In fact, I'm pretty well financed."

"The old game of draw and bluff, eh?" A deputy, who knew Shep's ability with the cards, grinned.

"Some draw and plenty bluff," said Shep dryly.

He sat in a rickety chair on his porch and watched the three officers and their outfit drifting down the road to Washout. It was the first time Shep had relaxed in weeks.

"Draw and bluff," he muttered.

He reached deep in a pocket and drew out the letter. Slowly he tore it into small bits and sifted them over the porch rail.

"The only damn letter I ever got in the mail in my life," he remarked aloud, "and I had to write it myself."

Old Hutch and Free Silver

By

EDMUND S. WHITMAN

FOR the first time in his spectacular business career Old Hutch flagged out of the country bound for a foreign port without carting along some sort of spurious bric-à-brac to sell the unsuspecting natives. Good reason. One of the boys in the office—George Gunderson—had the grand prize-winning ticket in the national lottery of the republic of Rompido down in the Caribbean. Rompido was in the Caribbean, that is—not George. And that was the trouble. Because, to collect the hundred thousand silver pisotes, the holder of the lottery prize ticket had to reside in the republic. And he had to present his ticket at the ministerio of finance within two weeks of the announcement of the grand drawing.

None of us will ever forget that fateful day when George got the bulletin from Rompido City. For awhile he didn't realize its import. Then he compared the bulletin with his ticket, and passed out cold. He came up fighting, though. His was not the spirit to fade out of the picture just when he was on the verge of an unexpected fortune.

"A hundred thousand piasters—wow!"

The office was in a turmoil. Everybody went popeyed. The office manager forgot his dignity and pounded old George on the back for all he was worth. The rest of us made a feverish checkup just to see that there was no mistake. We were all berserk about it.

All of us, that is, except Old Hutch. We had forgotten him in this first gigantic financial deal in which he played no rôle. But as we calmed down we noticed him poring over the big dictionary.

"Sober up, one of you bozos, and look at that ticket a second. What sort of money did you say that prize consisted of? Piasters? And if so, what kind of piasters? Turkish or Indo-Chinese? There is some difference in value."

"Not piasters, mug—pisotes. Rompidian pisotes."

Old Hutch looked up, his graceful, tapering finger still pointing out the coin column. He blinked his hazel-flecked eyes reproachfully.

"Your language—please," he counseled. "Mug is a term of opprobrium most distasteful—"

"Sore because you didn't win?"

"Please." Hutch tossed back a strand of sandy hair from his forehead. "You do me a profound injustice. I revel with you in George's triumph. Believe me, I revel."

"You look it."

"Boy, how you revel, you old reveler!"

"In fact—" Hutch unconsciously raised his voice— "if you bloodsuckers will go your several ways, I will sit in with George on some of the more deli-

cate problems that are bound to confront him."

We all howled him down. He shrugged his shoulders and returned to his desk.

"Permit me to withdraw, gentlemen. Give no heed to my rather specialized knowledge of lotteries. Give no consideration to the fact that none of you know the worth of the Rompidian pisote. Don't let the little fact that the winner must be a resident of that country or that he must call for his money within fourteen days of the drawing interfere with your little pleasures. That none of you have the foggiest idea where the republic of Rompido may be or how it may be reached—or for that matter what language may be spoken there—has nothing to do with the case, of course."

Well, the upshot of it all was that George and Hutch got together and drew up papers whereby the latter was to proceed at once to Rompido City to collect the money and bring it back, exacting as his fee one half of the entire prize.

This struck some of us as pretty steep; but Hutch challenged us to evaluate a hundred thousand pisotes in American dollars, and we were stuck. Not even the Rompidian consul cared to go on record. He inferred that the market fluctuated quite a lot—and why did we want to know? One of the boys nearly spilled the beans, but Hutch managed to trip him and take the phone away before he let the cat out of the bag.

"Didn't you hear me say that the winner had to be a resident of Rompido, dub? And I use the term advisedly. First thing you know you will beat us out of the coin entirely, talking fast and loose like that. Why, if you had told the consul the winning ticket was in New York it would be canceled in no time."

Poor George was white to the lips at the prospect of his fortune being wrested away. He fairly rushed Old Hutch out of the office, out of the country, down to Rompido. It was this rush that prevented the old maestro from taking along some porcelain pig banks or a consignment of jazzbo neckties on which to turn an honest dime on the side.

OLD HUTCH leaned confidentially on the counter of the Gran Hotel Rompido, the capital's leading hostel, and engaged the night clerk in conversation.

"Speakee English?" he questioned, accompanying the query with an infectious affirmative nod of his sandy head.

"Shuur. You speakee Rompidian?"

"Not much. I've only been here a month or so, but have admired your hotel so much that I can no longer refrain from registering."

He had left the boat only an hour before, but a few alibis to establish residence seemed to be in order. He dashed off his name.

"Tell me, mister—ah—"

"Filiberto, they call me." The night clerk smiled from behind his toothpick.

"Tell me, Phil, what are your rates and all that, what?"

"Three dollars a day."

"Ah, yes. But in pisotes. I prefer dealing in the national currency."

"Three dollars, American plan," hurriedly countered the hotel man.

Hutch did not care to press the point. He couldn't afford to arouse suspicion.

"How about a little advance?" Filiberto suggested.

"Why not? Good idea."

"Hutch produced a five-dollar bill. With alacrity the brown skinned man scooped it up and propelled two silver cartwheels across the counter.

"That pays you up a full day in advance," he said.

Two pisotes. Huge—worth a dollar apiece easily. This was what he had been waiting for in such a stew. Phil had given him change for his five, so the pisote must be equivalent to a dollar. He was walking on air as he followed Filiberto across the patio, past the macaw cage and up three flights of stairs to a corner room. It was bare but spacious. A narrow bed, a grass rug and a wash basin comprised the appointments. Two great windows gave on to the cathedral, which loomed dark and mysterious in the moonlight.

"Ah, this is fine. So monastic. I shall be in peace here. I shall sleep. And, Phil—be sure to awaken me early. I must be about my father's business in the morning."

"*Muy bien, patron.* Do not fear. You will be awake."

He leered at the visitor for a second and clattered down the hall.

"Now what the devil did he mean? I don't know that I altogether like Phil," Hutch muttered to himself.

He dived into his pocket and produced his two silver pisotes. These he weighed on his palm speculatively. But before he could give his mind to the ecstatic dreams they engendered, his nervous system was devastated by the ear-shattering reverberations of the cathedral bells.

Bong — bong - bong - bongbongbong!

The belfry was so near his windows that he could nearly read the inscriptions on the gigantic bronze masses as they swung vigorously back and forth in metallic stridency.

Every hour, on the hour, these tones crashed into the room and jarred Old Hutch clear to the marrow. By dawn he was haggard, and that would never do. He was scheduled to appear at the ministerio of finance at nine in the morning and wanted to be master of his every faculty. It was to be his big moment.

AT ELEVEN sharp—Hutch could tell by those cursed bells—a small, dapper party in a cutaway emerged from the dim interior of the Rompido Cantina across the dusty street, strolled into the gateway, examined the bougainvillea and Hutch, then produced an enormous key with which he unlocked the finance office.

Hutch followed him inside. His heart was thumping wildly, but he controlled himself. His nerves were not all they should be. He had had a bad night.

"Good morning," he vouchsafed.

"Not today," was the reply.

"What not today?"

"Magazines. Brushes. Whatever it is you sell. You Americanos are all the same. Always after money. Tsk! Tsk!"

"You do me a profound injustice."

"Sir!" The little man leaped up from his desk and clicked his heels together. "Permit me to assure you that the *ministro de moneda* is incapable of doing an injustice."

"In which case," Hutch hurried on, "please accommodate me in the amount of one hundred thousand pisotes." He fished in his coat pocket for his lottery ticket.

The little minister licked his lips.

"Accommodate you with *what?*"

"You heard me, as we say up in the States." Hutch grinned. "A mere matter of a hundred grand pisotes. The lottery prize. You know—the lottery." He waved the ticket.

A look of relief came over the brown face.

"Ah, you Americanos. Always making the fun. Ha! Ha-ha! I laugh. I too make the fun. Now get the hell out of here, as you say up in the States."

Hutch was puzzled. He was rubbing the man the wrong way. He didn't mean to.

"You've got me wrong. I do not mean to make the fun, señor. I am serious. I have won your national lottery. See. Here is your official bulletin, recording the drawing, as performed by two blind orphans of the convent. And here is the ticket, representing the grand prize, the hundred thousand silver pisotes."

"But that's impossible!"

The minister was polishing his glasses. He was serious at last. Not angry, just serious. He examined the credentials.

"But, my dear man," he reiterated, "that is impossible. That is not being done. Why, it is unheard of."

"Guess it's 'cause I live a clean life," Hutch rejoined modestly.

"No, no, no, no, you don't understand. It is that it is my function here to see to it that nobody win the grand prize! Why, never in the glorious history of Rompido has the grand prize been claimed! Why, the prize-winning tickets are *never* sold! Or if so, they are sold to our own cabinet officers and returned to this treasury. See?"

He dived under the counter and produced a cigar box. It was filled with the tickets of past lotteries.

"All the first prize winner," the little fellow said proudly. "A perfect record."

"Les' see the one covering this last drawing."

Hutch's voice was hoarse. A tight spot.

"Why, with pleasure."

The tickets were examined one after another. Carefully. Then more carefully. Then feverishly.

"Camel! Peeg! He-goat!"

"Smile, if you're addressing me," Hutch threatened.

"You? No. No, no, my friend. Not you. My man, Pedro. The worm. He it was who should have returned that ticket. Now I know why he did not return. He sold the ticket that I put in this box. You understand, of course."

"I understand that I hold the prize-winning ticket," Hutch replied, "if that's what you mean."

The little minister looked up at the sandy haired giant and smiled.

"Ah, you Americanos kill me—"

"I will if I don't get the dough," Hutch muttered under his breath.

"But, of course, you are not serious, my friend. Have I not explain that here in Rompido one simply does not win the prize? Why, my friend, there is no prize."

Hutch stuck out his jaw.

"Do you mean to tell me you haven't got the hundred thousand pisotes?"

The minister's face and actions were eloquent answer. He merely walked to an old battered safe in the corner, the door of which was partly open, swung it back and revealed a dusty interior containing a few postage stamps and a handful of clackers.

"There, my friend, you behold the treasury. A stamp, perhaps? Or one of these coppers as a souvenir of your visit to our great republic?"

Hutch hoisted himself gracefully up on the counter and swung his long legs over.

"Now listen, bozo," he said, worrying the minister's frayed lapel, "I'm not nearly as playful as you seem to think. I want my money and I'm going to get it. Now get this: Either you go out into the money market and corral my hundred thousand pisotes by the end of the week, or I will take such action with my Government as will ruin the financial credit rating of Rompido. I understand from the papers that you are negotiating a quarter of a million dollar loan from New York. What will the bankers say when I tell them about this astounding deception?"

He waved a contemptuous hand at the gaping safe in the corner.

The minister licked his gray lips.

"No, no, no, no, you would not do this. Think of our honor!" He drew himself up like a little marionette. "Think of our honor!"

"Think of my hundred thousand pisotes!" Hutch was decidedly unsympathetic. "I'll be back the end of the week with a dray. You have the silver ready, or its equivalent in gold."

The minister threw back his head and laughed merrily.

"Gold! Ah, my friend. Who ever heard of gold in Rompido?"

"I see quite a bit in your mouth," replied Hutch, "and I am personally going to extract it with a bone-hammer if you don't kick through with my prize by the end of the week. Savvy?"

The threat had a magical effect. The possibility of being deprived of his beautiful gilded bicuspids electrified the little fellow. He burst from the office, coattails flying behind him. Hutch followed him with his eyes and was comforted to see him disappear into the president's private office down the hall.

THE ensuing three days were somewhat agonizing. A dilapidated guard hung around the hotel and followed Hutch wherever he went by night or day. Something was in the wind, that was certain. Merchants, hack drivers and café proprietors with whom he had dealings all seemed remarkably well heeled with American money. They even made change in dollars, quarters, nickels and dimes. Where had all the pisotes gone? Could it be possible that the finance bureau was calling them in so that the prize money would be forthcoming? After all, a hundred thousand silver cartwheels was a lot of metal; and, in a small country like this, getting his prize money together might well be quite a problem.

Thursday morning at 11:00 A.M. Hutch received word to report with his dray to the treasury. There at the entrance to the government building a military escort was drawn up. There awaiting him in the patio was the entire

cabinet of the republic. The little minister popped forth and greeted Hutch as if he were a long lost brother. He rushed him into his office past several barrels of silver pisotes and seated him at the desk.

"We have your money, my friend, every last pisote of it, here in these barrels. It is yours. All we ask is that you relinquish your ticket and sign this receipt. Ah, this is a great day for Rompido."

It took Hutch three hours to effect the transfer of the silver to his hotel room. An enthusiastic but respectful crowd followed him back and forth as each barrel was moved. Old Hutch marveled at the control and sportsmanship of the Rompidians. He shuddered to think what might have happened to him under similar circumstances in Chicago.

Events moved swiftly. Hutch wired home to George and reported his victory. Then, with pockets bulging with silver cartwheels, he proceeded to the hotel café to make merry.

"Wine for the house," he bellowed, splashing a great handful of pisotes on the polished mahogany.

"Viva!" A mighty shout of joy went up from the natives gathered about the little tables.

With surprising alacrity the slow-moving bartender executed his order. There were toasts and cheering. Hutch was in the seventh heaven. He had already made up his mind that this little disbursement of funds would come under the general head of entertainment and as such could be charged against his expense account.

The bartender politely plucked at his sleeve.

"$17.50," he said.

"Take it out of the pisotes," Hutch replied; "and keep the change," he added in a sudden burst of generosity.

The bartender gravely pushed the silver back across the counter.

"Rompido is no longer on the pisote basis," he explained. "This morning, by presidential edict, our great country went on the gold standard, American money. Your money, my good friend. $17.50, if you please."

Old Hutch blinked. He swallowed. Multicolored lights flashed before his eyes. Another tight spot. He paid his check with a perfectly good twenty-dollar bill, groped for his scattered silver and stumbled out of the room.

Upstairs, surrounded by his barrels, he gave himself over to some deep thinking. That minister—oh, that little worm, that mug! He'd go to that minister and threaten to take every last pisote out of the country if they didn't make some equable adjustment.

It took him two hours to locate his prey. Finally he found him in the Rompido Cantina rolling dice with three other cabinet ministers. A great cheer went up as Hutch entered the cantina. He was a hero in the eyes of the populace. And why not? Not only was he the first man in the history of the republic to win the lottery, but also he was the means of the entire country's going off the highly questionable pisote standard and on to the American dollar.

He waved aside the invitation to join the cabinet in a slug of cherry bounce.

"I've come here to talk turkey with you bozos. You can't pull a stunt like this on me and get away with it. I just want you to know that this government must make me an equable adjustment for my hundred thousand pisotes—"

"Ah, my friend," replied the minister, "I must have neglect to tell you that by presidential decree the silver pisote has been nulled—feenish, gone what you call phhht, no good—the entire issue having been taken up with American dollars. You, my friend, are now sole owner of every silver pisote in the country. You are to be congratulate."

"I say pooh," Hutch replied. "I say bah. You understand that language? Pray tell me what earthly good eight barrels of pisotes will do me when I can't buy a plate of beans unless I have a silver quarter in my pocket? Now you listen here: If you don't make good on my pisotes within two days I am going to cart every single one of them out of your country, understand?"

The cabinet ministers buzzed with excitement. For a second Hutch thought that he had them and then the little minister popped up out of the huddle, his face beaming.

"Of course, my friend, you may do what you like with your prize. It is yours. But you must remember that it is contrary to law to take out of the republic of Rompido any of its currency."

The others nodded in approval.

"Oh, yeah? Surely since the silver pisote has been declared null and void it can no longer be considered national currency. I am consequently outside the law. My original proposal therefore stands."

Old Hutch had 'em there. He could see that it wrung their souls to have him get away with eight barrels of their silver pisotes. Once more they dived into a huddle, and this time Hutch confidently expected a favorable answer.

He did not like the look in the minister's eye as he came forward to make his final statement.

"I learn from the honorable collector of customs, seated here, that there is an export tax of $12 per pound for silver taken out of the republic of Rompido. We are a great people for our protective tariff, you know. And, of course, all customs payments are now on the basis of the American dollar. So you may find it will be rather expensive, my friend, if you care to return to your room and weight those eight barrels. And now, a cherry bounce?"

But Hutch had gone out into the night.

"SUNK. Down — and out. Completely surrounded with coin, yet I can't buy a cough drop with a carload. Now ain't that a pretty kettle of fish?"

Poor old Hutch was sitting on the edge of his bed with his chin in his hands, soliloquizing disconsolately as he sourly surveyed his prize.

"The next time I hear any man talking about barrels of money, he gets one old-fashioned Rompidian razzberry from me."

He jumped up and rang the bell. At least he was paid up two days in advance and he planned to run old Filiberto bowlegged. He was going to get a little service or know the reason why. Yes, and, by gosh, he was going to tip lavishly with silver pisotes!

"Come in," he bellowed in answer to the timid knock.

Filiberto, toothpick in mouth, entered the room.

"It is that you ring?"

"Yes, it is that I ring."

Filiberto regarded his guest with surprise.

"The señor snaps at me—why? Are you not the first man in the history of Rompido to win the grand lottery? Can it be that a man so lucky should be ill of the temper?"

"Lucky! That's a hot one. Why, Phil, I'm so lucky that if you were to rub my back you'd probably fall down the stairs and dig up a pint of diamonds with your nose."

Filiberto's active toothpick ceased its probings. Hutch had evidently given him food for thought—the one kind of food that he could not reach with a toothpick.

"Lucky," he whispered. "Filiberto Diez Gallegos Prudencio Castellano, lucky for the first time in his life. Why not?"

Then, his musings having crystallized into action, Filiberto dropped his toothpick entirely and fluttered from one barrel of silver to the next, thrusting his long palpitating fingers into the inexhaustible mass of pisotes.

Hutch watched him with interest as he finally whipped out his hand with one of the pieces in it and rushed over to the American.

"This shall be my lucky piece. One of the original and extinct silver pisotes of the republic of Rompido, part of the first lottery prize ever to be won in the history of my country. Oh, this is indeed my lucky day."

"Two bucks, American money," Hutch said.

He too was beginning to have an idea —an idea which expanded like an inflated balloon. He scarcely realized it when Filiberto placed two dollar bills in his hand and hurried from the room. Hutch sat thinking, thinking. Abruptly then he arose, seized his hat and rushed down to the office of the Rompido *Daily Press*.

Advertising rates were low, and Old Hutch contracted for a full page of space for an entire week. He ordered scare-

heads—glorious scareheads, 96-point Gothic type—announcing original, bona-fide, guaranteed silver pisotes from the first and only prize ever won in the national lottery, to be hand picked by the purchaser from the original barrels in which the money was delivered, all for a mere American two-dollar bill.

Old Hutch appealed to the superstition of the Rompidians by emphasizing the luck which possession of one of his pisotes was bound to bring.

He sold 8,000 the first day. The second day he reduced the price to $1.50 and sold 12,000 more. On the third day he made his price a flat $1.00, and drew the country trade for miles around. Within six days he had moved 50,000 silver pisotes, including one each to the cabinet ministers of the republic at a special inside price of $5.00 each.

Exactly one week after the silver pisote had been declared invalid Hutch had 50 per cent of the country's entire supply back into circulation. And he had exhausted his market. At this juncture he was favored with a visit from the minister of finance as well as the collector of customs.

"Ah, my friend—my very good friend—you have succeed in turning the finances of this country outside into, no?"

Hutch opined that he didn't know and didn't care.

"We wish you would get, what you call it, the hell out of here. What do you say?"

Old Hutch studied his objective. His mind was working fast. He saw that he had the enemy on the hip.

"In your own tactful way you infer that I am no longer welcome down here? I will, therefore, leave Rompido—" He studied the minister's face, watched it light up and then proceeded—"on condition that the government transports my remaining four barrels of pisotes to the seaport, waives the export tax—"

He spoke slowly, studying the men as he did so. He planned to keep pouring it on as long as he saw that the opposition could stand the strain.

"Settles my bills in the city and slips me, say, a hundred dollars as a sort of *bon voyage* gift. You savvy '*bon voyage*'?"

"We savvy '*bon voyage*'," they replied in unison, as if they had rehearsed the phrase.

"Then I understand that you accept my terms?'"

The little minister seemed near the point of tears.

"All but the hundred dollars," he said. "Ah, my friend, a hundred dollars is a lot of money. We do not have it in the treasury at this moment. Otherwise we would pay it, because we would dearly love to get rid of you."

Old Hutch laughed. Such a naive people.

"Tell you what I'll do. You take care of the other requirements and, in place of the hundred dollars in gold, have delivered to me aboard my steamer, free of all duty, one hundred dollars' worth of assorted native merchandise. Little things, you know—earrings, nose rings, bracelets, beads and all that sort of thing. These souvenirs of Rompido I will take back and make available to my friends up North."

"At a very small margin of profit, I suppose," the minister sneered.

"One more crack like that and I'll stay down here and sink you under a load of pisotes."

Hutch glared menacingly and ran his fingers through a barrel full of money.

"You are a nice fellow," the minister said. "We agree. Yes, you are a very nice fellow."

"And you are a couple of nice clean cut chaps yourselves," Hutch replied, rising to indicate that the interview was over.

After all, he believed in fair play. One kind word deserved another, particularly since words didn't cost anything.

"And what, if I may ask, do you intend to do with the fifty thousand silver pisotes when you get them North?" the minister asked as he stood by the door.

Old Hutch laughed.

"That's easy," he said. "I am going fifty-fifty with a friend of mine in New York who had a half interest in my ticket. I agreed to bring him back half of the prize money, and I intend to do so. The question really should be—what is *he* going to do with the fifty-thousand pisotes. Personally, I haven't the foggiest idea. Gentlemen, I give you a very good evening."

Conway's CODE

By L. PATRICK GREENE

"*INKOSI,*" Mpanda said thickly, his normally good-humored face contorted by a drunken, impudent leer, "we go back now. You are a fool if you remain. To stay here is to die. So—whether you come or stay—we go. I have spoken."

Having delivered his ultimatum, Conway's gunbearer attempted a grandiloquent pose, but his legs suddenly refused to support him. He took a few reeling steps forward. His hands clawed at the air, seeking the purchase that would enable him to preserve his balance; then he collapsed.

Conway looked questioningly at the natives who crowded the little jungle clearing. They moved uneasily. One by one they turned away, refusing to meet the challenge in his keen gray eyes. Their attitude was meant to suggest that they were not interested in the conversation between Mpanda and their *inkosi;* they affected to be concerned solely with the routine tasks of an evening outspan. But, as his carriers went about their appointed duties, Conway knew they were watching him intently, their ears pricked so they would not miss a word spoken by Mpanda and himself. They would not, he knew, overlook the slightest change in the inflection of his voice; and they would put their own interpretation on that change.

Conway sighed. This marked the end of the tenth day of hard trekking on the heels of a large herd of elephants, and he was very tired. Besides, he had been running a fever temperature these past two days and, though the fever was now gone, the quinine he had taken to combat it had left him splenetic.

But Conway was just; his self-control in times of great stress had helped to earn for him an enviable reputation as a big game hunter. And now the hard light in his eyes softened a little. His common sense was beginning to conquer his anger. In another moment, he told himself, he would be able to view this incipient mutiny in its true light and deal with it calmly.

Mpanda rose to his feet and took an unsteady step forward. He would have fallen again had not his strong black hands closed on the collar of Conway's white shirt. That steadied him for a moment.

"*Inkosi,*" he said again, his face very close to Conway's, "you are a fool. You—"

Perhaps even then Conway might have kept his anger under control had not one of the watching carriers laughed hysterically.

Conway stepped back sharply, ripping his shirt as he broke loose from the native's frantic grip. At the same mo-

ment he struck angrily at Mpanda's jaw. The blow landed squarely. It had all the force behind it of Conway's powerful six feet of muscular body, and Mpanda crumpled up as if life had been suddenly taken from him.

A loud curse, which was really a cry of pain, escaped from Conway's lips—and he looked stupidly at his right wrist which the force of the blow had broken. Already it was beginning to swell; the pain was excruciating.

He looked up at the natives. They seemed to have fused together, making one monstrous, many headed, leering savage. The jungle growth which walled the clearing appeared to whirl about him at dizzy speed.

With an effort Conway recalled his conscious self just in time to keep from falling in a faint across Mpanda's supine body. He knew that his face was showing white under its coat of tan and that the agony of his broken wrist was betrayed by the tenseness of his facial muscles. So he laughed harshly and shouted a series of threat-charged orders at the carriers who, resenting the way he had treated their spokesman, were glowering sullenly at him.

For a split second Conway thought they were going to rush him, and he fumbled awkwardly with his left hand at his revolver holster. But there was no need for him to draw. His prestige, their memory of the man he was, for the moment defeated them. They sullkily resumed their tasks.

Conway sat down on a rock outcrop and moodily considered the wisest course to take with them. He knew that presently they would call upon him to surrender to their demands and, unless he could prove to them that he was well able to protect them from the danger of which the drunken Mpanda had spoken, Conway knew he would be forced to give up the hunt just when success was in sight.

He cursed softly as he experimentally moved the fingers of his right hand. Not likely, he thought, that he could do any good shooting now. Under the circumstances it might be wiser to give in to his men's demands, telling them that he only gave up the hunt because his injured wrist made shooting impossible.

But such sophistry, he knew, would not deceive the men. They would still believe that he gave in to their demands because he was afraid of them. The affair, as he now saw it, was of infinitely greater importance than the success of the hunt. His prestige was at stake.

He frowned thoughtfully as he looked at Mpanda, who was still sprawled in an unconscious heap.

"It's the beer more than the blow that's keeping him under," Conway told himself, annoyed at his feeling of uneasiness. "I wonder where he got the stuff. I wonder—"

MPANDA had left the line of march early that morning, scouting ahead, as he had so often done, for sight of their quarry. When he had rejoined them at this jungle clearing about an hour before sunset, he had been hilariously drunk. The boisterous mood, however, had quickly passed and he had sat at one side scowling at the laughing sallies of the carriers.

Conway had ignored Mpanda at the time, knowing that when soberness returned an explanation would be given, accompanied by sincere expressions of contrition. Hearing some guinea fowl clucking metallically in the bush nearby, Conway had gone out with his shotgun to get some game for his evening meal. On his return, fifteen minutes later, his carriers—their fears aroused by Mpanda's drunken babbling—had crowded about him, demanding that he break camp at once and trek back the way they had come. When he laughingly refused and ordered them back to their tasks, Mpanda had approached him and delivered his ultimatum.

Conway thought now of his anger and the blow he had given.

"I ought to have known better," he reproached himself. "Mpanda wasn't responsible for what he did or said. He won't forget that blow I gave him in a hurry. Neither will I!"

He stared ruefully at his swollen wrist and then walked over to where Mpanda sprawled. He was relieved to discover that the native was breathing normally. The spasmodic twitching of the black man's limbs indicated that consciousness

was slowing returning.

The carriers ceased their labors and, grouping together, watched Conway intently.

He knew that a wrong move on his part now would precipitate the crisis he hoped to avoid. Consideration on his part for Mpanda—an attempt, for instance, to arouse the man to consciousness—would be interpreted as weakness. And, in Africa, there is no respect for weakness. On the other hand, if he stood there doing nothing, it was more than likely that the carriers would form the opinion that he was gloating over Mpanda, meditating fresh brutalities; and there would be born within them an angry hatred which would nullify the respect he had always received from them.

So he turned on his heel and ordered them back to their tasks.

Again they obeyed, or pretended to, milling about the little clearing like caged beasts under the lash of a trainer. But there were no bars to hold them in; only a white man's will. Freedom surrounded them. They had only to take two or three steps and they would be safe beyond his reach: safe even from revolver shots, even if Conway could persuade himself of the wisdom of killing one or two as an example to the others. Fear of death would not hold them, he knew, if they wished to go. Only their respect for him could hold them. Conway wondered if he had completely forfeited that respect.

From a roll of linen he had taken from one of his packs, Conway tore a long strip. He gave it to one of the carriers and instructed the man to bandage his wrist. The man, a tall, powerfully built Ba-Ila, obeyed with obvious reluctance until he saw the pain in Conway's eyes. Then he laughed and pulled the bandage as tightly as he could.

Conway gritted his teeth and stared fixedly into the native's face. The Ba-Ila's heavy lids lowered, hiding the expression in his eyes.

"Pardon, *inkosi*," he stammered and, making a hurried end to his task, shambled sheepishly away to join his companions.

Feeling swamped by the silence of the bush, Conway sat down again on the rock outcrop.

Normally the evening outspan was the happiest period of his carriers' day. Generally their laughter and songs shattered that pregnant silence which wraps the jungle before night finally falls and the creatures of darkness come into their own. Always before at this hour the carriers—the hardships of the day's trek forgotten, the unseen ghostly perils of the night still in the future—had behaved like carefree, happy children.

But today the gloom of the jungle seemed to possess them; they seemed to have become part of its furtive silence.

Conway knew that he himself was responsible for the change.

With that one blow dealt Mpanda he had broken the first rule of the code which had governed his treatment of natives during all his years of being a professional big game hunter. And not only had he broken the first rule —Never hit a native—but he had broken several of the ensuing ones. The second, for instance: If you must hit a native, don't use your fists. Use a *sjambok*. And the third: If you must use your fists, hit him in the belly.

Conway smiled wryly. The pain of his wrist was proof that the third rule of his code, at least, was a wise one.

THE crimson afterglow of sunset was beginning to fade from the sky. A greenish light, which seemed a reflection of the jungle foliage, gradually replaced it. Presently, Conway knew, there would be no more green light—only absolute darkness. He cursed. There still remained much to be done before the outspan could be counted safe for the night. Only two sides of the protective *scherm* had been built; his tent was not yet erected; no fuel had been gathered for a fire or water fetched from the stream which gurgled its way through a tangle of roots not a hundred feet distant.

Not yet—and normally it was the first thing they did on making camp—had the carriers made any preparations for their evening meal. They had not even opened the packs containing their food.

Conway knew what that portended,

though he thought it wiser to ignore it at present. Instead, he shouted at the carriers, reviling them for their sloth, encouraging them to swifter action. He quoted apt and pungent proverbs to give point to his scathing indictment of their laziness.

They affected to laugh whole-heartedly at his stories. They rushed about the clearing, simulating great industry, as if his exhortations had really shamed them. They chopped down more thorn bush, but neglected to build it into the *scherm.* They collected armfuls of wood —but it was green and useless as fuel. They filled the cooking vessels with water which was alive with squirming insects. They erected the tent, but it would collapse at the slightest touch.

And their food packs remained unopened.

Conway knew then that the carriers meant to desert him. They had decided on their course, and neither threats nor promise of reward would hold them. By one angry blow, the act of a split second, he had destroyed their confidence in him. He had been false to his own code; the fault lay entirely with him.

He looked at Mpanda who, recovered from the effect of the knockout blow he had received, was sitting up and staring dazedly about the clearing. The gunbearer's brows knit in a scowl of concentration as his eyes met Conway's. His lips parted; he tried to speak and winced at the pain the effort cost him. His eyes blazed with an angry, half mad light. His lips moved again, framing the words:

"You are a fool, *inkosi!* Death is for you—"

And then the carriers crowded about him, hiding him from Conway. They condoled with him over the hurt he had received; they praised his courage.

"But it wasn't courage," Conway commented inwardly. "It was impertinence. No, it wasn't that. He was drunk. He wasn't responsible. If I had told him we would trek back in the morning he would have been satisfied and, in the morning, would have forgotten all about it. Hell! I've made a mess of things. Couldn't even stick to my own rules. Went into a panic, like a greenhorn, and struck the best gunbearer I've ever had—or ever likely to have. I hit Mpanda. I hit him with my fist, in the head instead of in the belly. And I didn't stop to consider if I were right or wrong."

The fourth rule of Conway's code was: If you must hit a native, first make sure you are right.

He laughed loudly in self-derision, and the carriers turned to face him. They met his glance without flinching. One or two took an angry step forward.

He rose to his feet, determined to force them to a quick decision; determined to speak to them with all the eloquence his command of the vernacular and knowledge of their psychology gave him. Having broken the first four rules of the code, he told himself, he might as well break the fifth and last.

He raised his hand in the conventional appeal for a hearing. It was a needless gesture. The carriers were already silent. Their eyes were fixed on him.

He spoke to them rapidly, walking up and down before them, gesticulating, using all the tricks for commanding attention and driving home telling points practised by their own tribal orators. Words tumbled from his lips in a ceaseless spate: There was so much he wanted to say and so little time in which to say it.

Already the green jungle light was tinged with the mist of darkness; already the faces of his carriers were only indistinct blurs against the jungle background. For a little while teeth flashed whitely between parted lips; then the darkness hid them as night, absolute, ruled the jungle.

The throb of tomtoms at a jungle kraal pulsated through the air. A tree-hyrax screamed derisively; a leopard snarled. At the stream sounded soft, mysterious splashings. The air was filled with the drone of night-flying pests.

And Conway, scarcely conscious of the darkness, continued his harangue, reaching inspired heights of oratory.

He reviewed his life as a hunter. He dwelt at length on his long association with Mpanda and many of the carriers. He reminded the listening men of other treks they had taken together, of perils overcome, of dangers laughed at. He

came at last to the story of the present trek, from outspan to outspan. He enlarged on the good understanding which had always existed between them.

"Until," he said, "Mpanda came to us this evening, made mad by the beer he had drunk. He filled you with his own foolish, beer-born fears and he came to me demanding that I set my back upon the spoor we have followed. Aye, he demanded that and threatened me—whose part it is to order—if I did not obey. So I hit him. That perhaps was folly. See how I confess a fault! But Mpanda's offense was great. So I hit him. But mark this well, it was not Mpanda the hunter—Mpanda my friend—I struck; but Mpanda the drunkard . . . "

And more in this vein Conway said to them, trying to justify his action; trying to excuse, to himself at least, the breaking of his code.

And he continued to speak even though he knew their ears were deaf to him, even though he knew his words were echoing emptily against the jungle wall which hemmed him in. As he spoke they were melting slowly away from him. One by one, the darkness covering their movements, they left the clearing, leaving him to face alone the danger they professed to fear.

The sound of their singing as they hurried along the jungle trail presently impinged upon Conway's speech and brought him to a faltering conclusion.

HE WAS tempted to rush after them and force them to return, shooting those who dared to disobey. But he knew how impossible that would be, and how unjust.

For a moment he was filled with a panic of fear—a fear of that unknown danger which had caused his men to desert him. And it must have been a great peril to override their fear of the evil spirits which fill a jungle night with terror.

Bitter amusement presently replaced Conway's fear. He had broken the fifth and last rule of his code. He admitted a fault and asked forgiveness! Instead of assuming he was right, even though he knew he was wrong, he had crawled abjectly—and, in consequence, had lost the game.

The material loss which would result from his carriers' desertion faded into insignificance compared with his loss of prestige. His injured wrist might delay his hunt, but once that was mended he would be on his way again.

Judging by the loud booming of the tomtoms, he knew there must be a large kraal within a forenoon's trek. He would be able to get fresh carriers there, but not easily. The fact that one party of carriers had deserted would arouse the suspicion of the others he would engage. His reputation of understanding and fair dealing had been overthrown by one unreasoning angry blow. He would be forced to present himself to the headman of the jungle kraal as a supplicant, as one discredited, as one tried by his carriers and found wanting.

No matter how successful his quest for carriers might be, he would never find a gunbearer so brave and loyal as Mpanda had been.

Then Conway rose and put aside his moody recriminations. He became, once again, a man of action.

At first as he moved about the outspan he was handicapped by the abysmal darkness, a darkness which seemed filled with intangible shadows, a materialization of the beat of the throbbing tomtoms. His keen ears detected furtive rustlings in the bush beyond the clearing. That rustling served to make him content with the water the carriers had brought him.

The minutes lengthened, the darkness deepened. Low hanging clouds blotted out the stars, robbing him of the light which would have made his tasks easier to accomplish. The songs the deserting carriers chanted to ward off evil spirits had long since died away. Africa had engulfed them. Africa was threatening to engulf him.

After he had collected a good supply of dry fuel, he laid a fire and applied a match. As the flames licked hungrily about the wood, Africa receded from him—receded to the utmost limit of the circle of light cast by the dancing flames . . .

He heard a crashing noise as some heavy animal forced its way in panic-

stricken haste through the bush. He saw—they were like stars entangled in the thorn bush—two pinpricks of light on the edge of the clearing. He threw a burning brand toward them and laughed as they disappeared.

He prepared skoff, making sourdough bread to cook in red hot embers raked from the fire, coffee and a stew of buck meat and onions. That done, he set his camp in order—strengthening the supports of his tent, dragging under its cover the packs the carriers had left behind and closing up the gaps in the thorn *scherm* with the branches the carriers had cut.

By the time he had completed his task his meal was ready and he ate with hungry zest. His appetite satisfied, he sleepily prepared for bed.

The leaping flames of the fire made weird shadows on the canvas walls of his tent. Their changing pattern, dancing, it seemed, to the monotonous beat of the tomtoms, hypnotized him into forgetfulness of the pain of his wrist. Presently he slept, secure in the knowledge that the clearing, the *scherm,* the tent, were his territory. The fire which blazed so brightly was a symbol of white man's authority over all things African —man and savage beast.

HOURS passed. The beat of tomtoms at the jungle kraal faded to an interminable murmur. A sudden wind fanned the fire into a fiercer blaze. Tongues of flame fought angrily upward, as if searching for the destroyer of their calm, peaceful burning. Glowing sparks wove dancing, intricate patterns in the darkness. The wind died down again as suddenly as it had arisen. For a little while the flames continued to flare brightly, then sank back on themselves as if exhausted by their outburst of fury. Finding no more fuel on which to feed, they died down, flickering spasmodically.

The circle of light cast by the fire contracted gradually. Darkness crept out of the jungle. It reached the thorn stockade and halted there for a time, when the fire, as if aroused to combat the threatened danger, blazed more brightly. It was only a temporary spasm. The flames paled and darkness crept on again. Shadows no longer danced on the walls of the tent. There were no shadows. They had merged into African darkness. The fire was now only a heap of red embers. Its light was a crimson, halo-like glow which steadily contracted.

At one time in the early years of his career as a big game hunter, Conway's instinct would have aroused him to replenish his dying fire so that its light could shatter the darkness and disperse the death which crept under the shadow of night. But now that instinct failed him. For many years, at the countless outspans of a hundred treks, Mpanda had supplanted Conway's instinct. And Mpanda had never let the fire die down no matter how tired he was—no matter how arduous the day's trek had been.

Now, atrophied by long years of disuse, the instinct which should have guarded Conway could do no more than disturb the easy rhythm of his sleep with a heavy groaning sigh, a spasmodic twitching of his legs, and a half-awakening from which he immediately dropped into a deeper and profounder sleep.

The fire's halo had contracted yet more. Africa won back the clearing to itself. The darkness rolled forward, and with the darkness came a man—a man who crawled stealthily on his belly, making no sound to mark his progress.

At the *scherm* he was delayed a little as he made a passage through the thorn hedge, removing several branches with infinite care. These, after he had passed through the gap he had created, he replaced. It was as if Africa, having gained entrance to forbidden territory, was making sure of remaining, shutting itself in.

The man waited for a few moments at the thorn bush, listening intently. When the bell-birds tonked dismally in the jungle about the clearing it seemed as if he tried to fuse his body with the ground. He had then no shape. He became, as it were, an advance-guard shadow of the night's darkness.

As he passed very close to the fire, the ebony blackness of his naked skin was flecked with a crimson tinge. His face, contorted by his emotions and the physical strain of his creeping, was the face of Mpanda. The glow of the red embers

threw into relief for a moment his mightily muscled back. The next moment he had passed from the vague firelight into absolute darkness.

And then, his goal almost reached, the tent no more than a few yards distant, something hurtled out of the darkness and struck him forcefully on the back of the head, and he collapsed with a muttered groan. Two assegais, propelled by muscular savage arms, accompanied the knobkerry on its flight through the darkness. One of them seemed to pierce Mpanda's back and, transfixing him, pin him to the ground.

The jungle's night silence was suddenly shattered by a hellish din as naked savages, yelling shrilly, debouched from the darkness of the jungle. They leaped over the *scherm* and raced toward the tent, scattering the fire's red embers with their naked, hurrying feet. The knobkerries and assegais which they flung at the first mad moment of their rush, carrying the message of death they meant to inflict, thudded against the tent, tearing gaping holes in the coarse canvas.

Conway, forcing himself up out of a nightmare of sleep, awoke to a nightmare of reality. He lost precious moments fumbling for his revolver with his useless right hand. Before he could rectify his error, before, even, the fog of sleep was completely dispelled from his brain, his tent collapsed about him, smothering him in its clinging folds.

He struggled to free himself, and the mocking laughter of the savages—although muffled by the thick folds of canvas—sounded in his ears like the voice of Africa triumphant.

Heavy forms dropped on top of him, knocking the wind from his body. He was rolled over and over. They shrouded him in the tent which for so many years had been his habitation and an outpost of civilization.

Ten minutes later the warriors took the trail again, heading back to their kraal in the jungle, chanting wild songs of savage exultation over a victory gained. They trekked very slowly, for they were heavily burdened.

Four men carried Conway—and Conway was very heavy. Swathed in the folds of the tent and lashed with ropes, he looked like a gigantic cocoon. The other warriors fetched the packs the deserting carriers had left behind. Already they were boasting of the wealth and tribal victories the white man's possessions would earn for them.

AT THE clearing nothing remained but the *scherm*, which had not been strong enough to keep out savage Africa; the fire, which had proved an empty symbol of white men's superiority, and Mpanda.

The gunbearer lay face down on the ground, as motionless as if death had silenced him. After awhile he stirred slightly and, raising his head, listened intently.

Mpanda raised himself slowly on hands and knees. As he did so the assegai, which appeared to have pinned him to the ground, dropped from its perpendicular position. Actually it had passed under his armpit. Only the pressure of his arm against his side had kept it from falling to the ground. It had not harmed him, but it had served its turn.

As he rose to his feet he chuckled softly. By pretending to be dead he had escaped death.

His head ached dully from the pain of the knobkerry blow, but for the time being he could forget the hurt he had received in joy at the success of his ruse. Tonight he could forget. Tomorrow, if he lived, he would remember many things.

The songs of the departing warriors were now so faint that they seemed but a low vibration of the tomtoms which, after a period of silence, were asserting their sway over the jungle once again.

Supporting his jaw with his hand, Mpanda gave the cry of the "go-away" bird. It was a poor imitation of a call easily imitated, and its utterance pained him. His jaw was swollen from the blow the *inkosi* had given him. By some queer twist of reasoning he took credit to himself that the blow had not driven his jawbone up into his head. He was conscious of a feeling, too, of ungrudging admiration for the man who had hit him. He felt, somehow, that the strength of the blow was his strength.

Again and again he sounded the gray

lory's cry. As it came from his half parted lips, the cry was harsh and strangled, but it sufficed. It could carry through the darkness to the ears of the men who listened for it.

"Go-away! Go-away!" The cry echoed through the jungle.

After that there was silence for awhile, save for the throb of the tomtoms. Then many shadows materialized from the darkness. The scattered embers of the fire illuminated them vaguely. They appeared like vague spirit shapes which had been conjured from the darkness by Mpanda's rallying cry. They breathed hard and painfully. They had raced at top speed through the jungle thickets in the night's darkness.

Even so Mpanda rebuked them.

"Was it fear slowed your feet?" he challenged.

His articulation was thick, his speech evidently labored. The sarcasm of his accusation silenced their stammering explanations.

He continued:

"They have taken the *inkosi*. They have taken the load you carried."

"Is the *inkosi* dead?" one asked.

"I do not know," Mpanda answered. "He was asleep when I came to this place. I thought to creep on him silently, unobserved; but before I could carry out my purpose those others attacked. Then I pretended to be dead, else I would now be dead!" He chuckled grimly. "So I did not see what happened to the *inkosi*. But he did not shoot or cry out. Perhaps he thought I still kept watch over him. And now—" Mpanda inhaled deeply, drawing in his belly, inflating his powerful chest—"now we must act quickly."

"What can we do? What is to be done?" one objected.

"You should be with the women," Mpanda sneered. "Those jungle dogs have taken the *inkosi*, the packs—everything. It is for us to take from them what is ours."

"In the darkness we can do nothing," another wailed helplessly.

"Because of the dark we can do everything," Mpanda countered.

"They are many. We are few."

"The darkness will hide our numbers, fool," Mpanda said equably.

"Without weapons," began the tall Ba-Ila, the same man who had bound Conway's wrist, "without weapons, Mpanda—"

"*Au-a!*" Mpanda turned on him angrily. "You are like a woman weeping beside an empty stream. Your tears flood it and you wail because you can not cross! There are spears and knobkerries which those others in the folly of their wrath have left behind. Gather them up. There should be enough for all. Hurry! The night ages. Soon it will pass, and there is much to do before the sun uncovers us."

Mpanda said no more. The short delay had given the carriers time to recover their breath. The objections they had advanced had been made solely in order that Mpanda's answers should strengthen them to follow the course upon which they were already determined. They divided what weapons they could find, then, headed by Mpanda, they left the clearing.

Presently they were racing along a jungle trail which led to the kraal from which the night raiders had come. The songs and laughter of the men they followed sounded clearly in their ears. When at last they came to a halt they were so near their quarry that they could hear the stragglers grunting under the loads they carried.

Mpanda whispered a series of curt orders. When he had finished, half of the men followed him as he led the way into the jungle at the right of the trail. They hurried silently along a course which paralleled the path followed by the warriors of the kraal.

The remaining men—their leader was the tall Ba-Ila—entered the jungle on the left of the trail.

AT ABOUT this time the four warriors, who carried Conway at the head of the long straggling line, came to a halt and dropped their load on the ground.

Said one, grumbling:

"Why should we carry this white dog any farther? Doubtless he is already dead. If he is not, let us kill him."

"It is forbidden," another said harshly. "The order was to bring him back to the kraal alive that he may show us

how to use his firesticks. After that, after he has shown us what we wish to know, then—" The speaker laughed meaningly.

"At least," urged the grumbler, "at least let some one else share the weight of him. *Au-a!* He is the weight of a man, and again a man. My back aches from weariness. The—"

He stopped abruptly and stared about him wild eyed with fear as the gray lory cry broke the silence.

"What was that?" he gasped.

He was answered by the mocking laughter of his fellows.

One said scornfully—

"A bird calls out in a nightmare dream and you tremble in fear of spirits!"

The explanation was passed down the long line of men who, having caught up with their leaders, had halted and were resting on the packs they had stolen.

The jungle rippled with their mocking laughter and so they did not hear the "go-away" scream of another bird in the jungle directly opposite the first, and the cries of a third and a fourth at the far end of their line.

They were still laughing, rocking helplessly back and forth, when Mpanda, the Ba-Ila and their followers sprang upon them.

The surprise was complete. Darkness hid the number of the attackers and, thinking they were opposed by the full fighting force of a rival kraal, the resistance of the kraal warriors was very feeble.

A few fought in silent desperation. The majority took to their heels and hurried through the jungle to summon reenforcements. Within five minutes the fight was all over. The few jungle men who fought so bravely would now fight no more.

Mpanda's stern voice silenced the exultant shouts of the carriers.

"There is still work to be done," he said. "Soon the day will break, and we can not overpower all the warriors of the kraal."

Even as he spoke the tempo of the tomtoms changed. The thundering, rallying beat charged the air with ominous threats of vengeance.

The carriers did not have to be told again. They picked up the packs and headed eastward through the jungle.

Mpanda and the Ba-Ila exchanged a few short hurried sentences. Then they picked up the canvas bale that was Conway and hurried after the men.

AN HOUR later, at sunup, they came to a river. Here they rested, and Mpanda unfastened the canvas bale. The men crowded around him, shouting fervently as Conway, white of face, shaken and bruised, stared wonderingly about him. They shouted again in admiration when they saw that he covered Mpanda with the revolver which he held in his left hand.

"There is much to be explained," Conway said coldly.

Mpanda chuckled.

He and the Ba-Ila were down on their knees massaging Conway's numbed limbs.

"Truly, *inkosi,*" Mpanda said, "there is much to be told. But not now. When strength comes back to your legs we must trek—and trek fast."

"Having carried me so far," Conway said sarcastically, "why do you want me to walk?"

"Not walk, run, *inkosi,*" Mpanda replied. "But truly we could not cut you loose before. There was need of great haste. We dared not wait at that time while you clothed yourself."

"Nor should we wait now," the Ba-Ila interrupted. "The dogs have found our spoor."

The yells of angry warriors were borne clearly to their ears. Looking back along the trail they had taken, they could see scintillating spots of light, where spearheads reflected the rays of the morning sun.

"We must trek fast, *inkosi,*" the Ba-Ila said. "If you can run, good. If not, we will carry you."

"I can run," Conway said curtly, as he hurriedly dressed himself. "I can run, but I see no reason why I should run."

"Then look, *inkosi!*" Mpanda exclaimed. "Here come the men who captured you."

Conway turned and saw naked, painted warriors rushing through the

thinning bush toward them. Though he was still bewildered, still inclined to the belief that Mpanda and the carriers were playing a trick on him, he ordered curtly—

"Trek fast!"

When they had crossed the river, Mpanda ran to his side that he might indicate the course they were to follow. They ran for awhile in silence, then Mpanda gasped:

"*Inkosi,* it was not I who demanded things of you last night. The beer I had drunk fuddled my wits. The *inkosi* will forgive?"

"I have already forgiven," Conway replied.

"*Au-a!*" Mpanda breathed his relief. "The *inkosi* is understanding and just. And the *inkosi's* wrist? It is better?"

"The story you have to tell will, perhaps, heal it," Conway replied dryly.

Mpanda chuckled

"A little faster, *inkosi,*" he urged. "They are gaining on us."

Looking back over his shoulder Conway saw his carriers, their faces grim, laboring hard at his heels. Far behind raced the pursuing warriors who, unhampered by heavy loads, were closing up fast.

"Tell the carriers to drop their packs, Mpanda," Conway ordered.

The gunbearer shook his head.

"No, *inkosi.* They carry their honor. They may not discard it."

They were racing now over one of those vast, park-like spaces which haphazardly break the jungle's monotony. The ground was soft and springy under their feet. There were no creeping vines to trip them; no thorn bush to tear their flesh.

Conway, glancing curiously at his gunbearer, noted how finely drawn the man was. His cheeks were indrawn, his belly hollow and his eyes glazed with pain. Conway asked softly:

"The blow I gave you, Mpanda? Does it hurt very much?"

"Not now, *inkosi,*" the native replied with a grin. "And never, I think, was the pain as great as my anger. *Au-a!* The folly of my anger! Run a little faster, *inkosi!* The dogs travel fast."

"And do we run all day?" Conway panted. "My breath is failing."

"Then do not talk, *inkosi,*" Mpanda chuckled. "But soon we need run no more. Soon we come to a river and, once across that, there we will find a place to rest in safety."

They came presently to a wide, swiftly flowing river. On the other side of it the jungle grew thick again.

Conway and Mpanda halted for the carriers to catch up with them. They drew to one side a little and Conway ordered the men to hasten to the other side and seek refuge in the jungle thickets. He had a word of praise for each one. He joked with them as they scrambled down the steep, muddy bank and was rewarded by the happy smiles which lighted up their tired faces. He felt that he had recovered all he had lost in the night's darkness. The vile, threatening shouts of the pursuing warriors he scarcely heeded. He forgot his suspicions that this headlong flight was a trick of his men to force his hand.

"Hurry!" he said to Mpanda. "There is no need for you to stay. I can keep them back until you have crossed the river."

"There is no need for you to stay, either." Mpanda chuckled. "We can cross the river before those dogs close up sufficiently to do us harm. And, once across the river, we are safe. Come!"

Conway shook his head.

The warriors were so near now that one of them, who ran in advance of the others, attempted a spear throw. His weapon fell far short of its mark, but it served a purpose. It stated, dramatically, the bloodthirsty intentions of the racing men; it added fuel to their killing lust. Their speed increased. They yelled like beasts of prey in sight of their quarry.

Conway fired. At the report and the feathery plume of dust the heavy bullet churned up almost at his feet, the leading warrior halted abruptly and dropped to the ground. The others scattered swiftly, stooping low and taking cunning advantage of every scrap of cover.

"It is enough, *inkosi,*" Mpanda said. "Let us go."

Conway looked over his shoulder at the river. The last man of the long, straggling line of carriers had reached

the opposite bank. He emptied his revolver—firing haphazardly, with no intent to kill or even maim—at those warriors who were advancing too swiftly. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he followed Mpanda down the steep bank.

By the time they had crossed the river and were hidden in the thick growth which fringed the top of the bank, the warriors had commenced to breast the swift current.

"Here I stay," Conway said, holding out his hand for the rifle Mpanda carried. "One or two, at least, shall not live to do you or the carriers hurt."

He said this to test his recurring belief that the chase was only a mock one. And when Mpanda strenuously objected to his plan and held back his rifle from him, he smiled grimly and followed his gunbearer along a trail leading back from the river. Actually, now that he had Mpanda and the carriers back with him again, he did not care whether he had been tricked or not.

SUDDENLY he was conscious that the jungle on either side of the trail was crowded with armed warriors who waited in grim silence. They were, he saw, warriors of a kraal on this side of the river. A long standing intertribal feud existed between them and those others.

At first Conway was incensed at the thought that he and his men had been used as bait to lure the others into the ambush. But there was nothing he could do. And, no matter how greatly he desired, he could do nothing to prevent the wholesale slaughter which would ensue when the waiting warriors sprang the trap.

So he raced swiftly, silently, at the heels of Mpanda, fully conscious that his passing was of no interest to the men who waited in grim silence, their hands gripped tightly about the hafts of their spears.

Not until Conway and Mpanda had reached the large clearing, where the carriers were already at work strengthening the thorn *scherm* they had built during the night's darkness, was the trap sprung.

In an instant the exultant shouts of the pursuing warriors were changed to shouts of consternation as the hidden enemy attacked. The air was filled with screams of death and the sound of blows landing on unresisting flesh.

For two hours the fight was waged with unabating ferocity. Again and again little groups of milling warriors passed close to the *scherm* behind which Conway and his men waited in tense expectation of being forced into the struggle. But the men who had given chase to them had more than they could cope with already. The others, perhaps in gratitude for the part they had played in leading their ancient foes into the ambush, were content to let them remain neutral.

At last it was all over. Not a man remained alive to return across the river with word of the disaster which had overtaken them. And the victors, their ranks sadly depleted, returned jubilantly to their own kraal and the feast which had been prepared for them.

For an angry moment the river was tinged with blood; for awhile crocodiles quarreled over the division of the harvest which the battle had reaped for them. Then there was silence, a silence which wrapped itself around Conway's camp. And the carriers, exhausted by their night's labors, slept soundly.

Only Mpanda and Conway remained awake, keeping guard over the sleepers. It was then that Conway heard an explanation of things.

Shortly after he had scouted ahead yesterday morning, Mpanda had come in contact with a party of warriors from the kraal across the river.

"They had much beer with them, *inkosi,*" Mpanda said, "and they were drunk, being very young. They made me drink with them while they debated whether or not they should kill me."

These men had boasted to Mpanda about the surprise attack they were soon going to make on the kraal of their ancient enemies. They had plied Mpanda with more beer and then told him of their plan to capture Conway and force him to fight for them against their enemies.

"And so, *inkosi,*" Mpanda commented with a chuckle, "I told them that you were an evil man who marked the backs

of your carriers with a *sjambok*. I told them that you were wiser than an elephant and twice as strong. Without my aid, I told them, they would never capture you."

Evidently the men had been impressed by Mpanda's description of Conway, for they had sought to enlist the gunbearer on their side. They offered him bribes if he would desert and persuade the carriers to desert with him.

"That I promised to do, *inkosi*. I promised that quickly so I might bring you word of the evil they intended. But they would not let me go. All through the day they kept me with them making me drink until, at last, I drank because of the desire that was within me. So when I came at last to you I was so drunk that I could only babble foolish things, filling the hearts of the carriers with fear. So, justly—you did not know the true meaning of things—the *inkosi* hit me. *Wo-we!* And then to the folly of drunkenness was added the folly of anger. Truly, anger closed my lips when consciousness returned, or I could have spoken wisely."

And so Mpanda had said nothing to deter the carriers from deserting. He had deserted with them.

"We trekked swiftly, *inkosi*," he said, "the pain of my jaw feeding my anger until we came to this place."

Conway gathered that it was while they were building the *scherm* that Mpanda's anger had evaporated.

"I recalled then that I had deserted you, *inkosi*. I balanced the blow you had given me in anger against the years we have hunted together. And the blow was nothing.

"I spoke to the others, telling them the truth of things. When I had finished —*au-a*—they were of the same mind as myself.

"One we sent with a message to the kraal of those warriors who waited in ambush. He was to tell them of the evil planned against them. He was to tell them of the thing we planned. The rest of us hastened back to you."

Mpanda paused for breath.

"*Au-a!* Almost we came too late. The warriors had surrounded the outspan. They were too many for us. It was dark and we had no weapons. I crawled through their ranks. And you slept. I dared not shout to awaken you. It was in my mind to waken you stealthily and lead you away to hide in the bush. Before I could do that, those others attacked. And they carried you away.

"*Wo-we!* The rest you know."

But Conway would not let it rest there. And so Mpanda told him of the manner in which the carriers had followed up the warriors, rescued their *inkosi* and recovered the stolen packs.

"In the darkness they did this," Conway muttered when the tale was told. "They conquered their fear of evil spirits—"

"The fear was still with them!" Mpanda chuckled sleepily. His head dropped forward, his eyes closed. He muttered, "*Wo-we!* The strength of your fist, *inkosi!*"

Then he surrendered to the fatigue of his aching limbs and the somnolent spell of the jungle's noonday calm.

Conway kept watch alone and was content to do so. There was pride in his eyes as he looked at the sprawling forms of his sleeping carriers; a pride that was softened by sincere affection when he looked at Mpanda.

He gently massaged his injured wrist and nodded as if at a decision suddenly reached.

The blow he had given Mpanda, he told himself, had entirely blotted out his old code and written a new one—a code from which, he was determined, he would never deviate. Never hit a native! That was the first and last rule of his new code.

Concluding

Blood Royal

By F. R. BUCKLEY

The Story Thus Far:

IN A moldy old office in Liverpool the firm of Halsey, Wall, Parkins & Wilberforce—all fictitious except obese and sinister Mr. Parkins—conducted a profitable business in gun-running and barratry. Old Parkins was therefore keenly disappointed when his well insured *Joan Shaw* returned to port after delivering guns to the shaky little republic of San Pablo in the Caribbean, and being shelled for her trouble. Indeed, he admitted his regret that the second mate, Michael Clancy, hadn't been shot as had the ship's captain and first mate.

Michael Clancy—American born, but claiming descent from the kings of Ireland—had expected a fat bonus for his manful struggle to bring the ship in. Instead, Mr. Parkins tossed him an insulting tip—five one-pound notes—and ordered a couple of bouncers to kick him out of the office. Clancy's rage would probably have eaten him into a ghost if he had not almost immediately encountered the very man who could crystallize his anger into practical vengeance. This man was Señor Martinez, San Pablonian consul. San Pablo needed an admiral for its navy, and Martinez assured Clancy he was the very man for the post.

Bidding his old third mate, Wilks, a scornful farewell, and recruiting the *Joan Shaw's* dubious crew as under-officers, the next morning Clancy sailed as admiral on the *Santa Lucia* with his two vice-admirals and twenty captains, more or less. Bound for San Pablo, Clancy's new command exercised the old Spanish-American custom which demands that there be no such thing as a warrior without rank.

Arrived in San Pablo, Admiral Clancy got on famously with Señor Bo, president of the country, whose main job was to keep the bordering state of Redondo from organizing an attack. With the candor of a true soldier-of-fortune, Admiral Clancy admitted that he served President Bo not for glory but because of a desire to seize old Parkins's next ship, which would certainly be arriving with a cargo of guns for Redondo. It was a Parkins specialty to furnish guns to the highest bidder along that coast.

After quelling a few minor mutinies among his Liverpool captains, Admiral Clancy inspected his antique litle navy and began to work himself into the mood of a San Pablo patriot. But he was cautious. On the understanding that he would invent a cause for war against Redondo which would avoid U. S. intervention, Clancy got Bo's promise that he would be paid in gold.

"And now," he said to Bo, confidentially over a bottle of *pruna*, "where is a bad man who will teach me the language? How bad a man can you find?"

"Anything you want," Bo answered proudly.

"All right," said Clancy. "Send for him!"

Thus Clancy looked forward to meeting Ramon, the self-styled king-maker.

ENSUED two months of San Pablonian Summer; which differs from the Summers of other nations chiefly in its much superior likeness to Tartarus. Long ago, when white explorers first arrived to find the place populated by unarmed and undeserving natives, the climate was warm, but pleasant; trees clothed the plain which separates the present city from the encircling ring of mountains, and a broad river of peculiarly crystalline water aided

in the cooling of the air. Since then, of course, the woods have been converted into newspapers, and the river into electric light to read them by.

And one either gets used to, or dies of, the Summer, very quickly—a proverb which, for all its consolation, was more than anything else at the bottom of the bitterness of the San Pablonian navy. It was pointed out on all hands that one could only get used to the Summer by adjusting oneself to it—preferably with a hammock and a long drink.

This new admiral would neither permit adjustment, nor would he allow anybody to die. He took the fleet out on cruises in the hottest weather, pretending that it would be cooler at sea; he made honest men load, train and fire large guns, all within two minutes, and seemed dissatisfied with that; he answered a threat of unanimous sunstroke by rigging awnings and announcing that any afflicted person would visit the brig, where it was dark; and he had abolished both the smoking of cigarets and the eating of fruit by men on duty.

The spirits of departed San Pablonians, returning via the ouija-board, had been accustomed to likening their motherland in Summer to the third or fourth layer of the nether hereafter; the fleet, scrubbing uniforms and decks, polishing brass, setting up rigging with accursed gringo knots that would not come untied; scaling boilers, shifting ballast and so following, agreed that the shades had never served under El Almirante Clancy. But then, as the *Santa Marta's* boatswain put it (he had mislaid his sidearms the day before, and been fined three months' pay), "The devil brings his own climate with him."

Whereat the navy shrugged helplessly, worked agonizingly and—hoped. There were other grapevines in San Pablo than those from which the hillmen make *vinho;* and the more the Summer wore on, the more El Almirante oppressed his command with day labor and the manual of arms in the mornings and evenings, the more did the news grapevine inform the navy that soon—very soon—there would be a rebellion. When it would start was not stated; nor who was behind it; what it was about was not known—and of course mattered very little anyhow; merely, a revolt was brewing, wherein crews might sit in judgment upon their officers. The thought was of infinite aid and comfort to the navy; indeed it, more than any other thing save the direct gaze of Mr. Clancy, which could not be everywhere simultaneously—prevented a mutiny which even the mutineers would have regretted.

It was with real relief—especially after that morning when the admiral himself had turned a live steam hose on them—that the San Pablonian navy abandoned its plan of illegal disobedience and awaited the revolt.

A relief which might have been modified could it or its properly accredited spokesmen (but they were in hospital, following the live steam incident) have been present, on the night of July 27th, in a back room of the Palacio del Presidente, in San Pablo. The admiral—the fleet was anchored offshore nowadays, watched by a jealous army with machine guns—had gone ashore in his barge at four bells; he was there, in full uniform except for his hat, tunic and trousers, and with his feet on the mantelpiece. Opposite him, sweltering even in the blast of an electric fan, sat President Bo, in pajamas; and between the officials sat the individual known simply as Ramon. Being a person of no social standing—being indeed the bad, bad man selected by El Presidente as the admiral's Spanish instructor—Ramon had not the others' regard for the niceties of dress. A pair of trousers sufficed him; he sat on the floor, drinking *tequila* and contributing jewels of wisdom.

As well he might. For the discussion concerned the revolution, so gaspingly awaited by the navy of which he was no more or less than the head and front. In various modes and in various disguises, and always with the utmost cheerfulness, he had so arranged matters that to all international intents and purposes the republic of Redondo had fomented, and—which was really amazing—organized a totally fictitious rebellion among the citizenry of its neighbor, San Pablo. Of which organization—he was less inclined to be communicative about the finances—he had proofs under the sign manuals of the criminals involved. All of whom were high Redondian officials—as Señor

Bo, who now held the papers, had seen for himself.

"BUT Moreno didn't sign," said the president in sad Spanish.

"Eh?" demanded Admiral Clancy.

Ramon, who understood English perfectly, smiled and let smoke trickle easily from his nostrils.

"What you think?" he asked the admiral. "Of course Moreno wouldn't sign. Only a fat man with the prickly heat—" Señor Bo scratched himself dismally "—would be such a fool. But Moreno's secretary of state signed the proclamation of revolt; an' his secretary of war, an' all those others. Also a lot of friends of Señor Bo—good San Pablonians; an' if I hadn't thought of having two inkwells, one with real ink an' the other with what you call disappearing ink, I bet you hell for everlasting Señor Bo wouldn't like to read all the signatures. I think I do a damn good job. Nobody but me could have do it, an' now I done it, you know what I think? I think I wish I was a barber again, like once in Jamaica. Give a man a good haircut, you get a shilling tip. Give a man a kingdom, an' stretch your brains fixin' it he shouldn't know his best friends would stab him in the back quicker than what he thinks his enemies, an' you get a kick in the pantaloons."

"You're a good boy, Ramon," said President Bo; and was waved into silence.

"What you think I am, I don't care," he announced superbly. "Even if you didn't itch now, I shouldn't care. I ask El Almirante."

"You don't wanta razz me," said the Core of the Universe pathetically. "I got an inferiority com—"

"Well, I think," said Mr. Clancy, "that you certainly got enough here—an' like Ramon says, if it hadn't been for that invisible ink, likely you'd have had too much. You want to appreciate your friends, President; like Ramon an' me, for instance. He's got Redondo committed up to the eyeballs, an' I'm the boy that'll execute the sentence. If Moreno's ministers signed up without consultin' him, of course he just gets a bigger raspberry; but anyhow, we can declare war. Fomentin' a revolution—invasion of a friendly state—conspiracy to overthrow an established government—gosh, even the League of Nations'd have to hold its nose."

"The United States won't send Marines?" asked Señor Bo apprehensively.

"Not so long 's Iowa an' them States is in the Union. Anyhow, not against us. So that's that. We can start the war over the weekend if that suits you, President."

"Not Saturday. I got to go up to the hills to see my other wife."

"When'll you be back?"

"Monday morning. Why did you let me eat those strawberry for dinner, Clancy? You know the things give me a rash. Ramon, scratch me between the shoulders. I think I go crazy!"

"Well, if you sign the declaration of war Monday," said the admiral, "we can sail that morning; take the siesta while we're lookin' for their navy, see, an' fight 'em in the cool of the evenin'. I dunno how much my men've heard about this revolt, an' I don't want to try 'em too high. Be hell fightin' Redondo an' a mutiny I'd fixed up myself, all at the same time. However—say, Ramon, you're sure of your dope about this ship that's bringin' arms to the rebels? She is the *Grace Jones* for sure?"

Leaving his surgical duties, Ramon reseated himself.

"Certain. I myself see all the cables to Halsey, Wall, Parkins & Wilberforce, Limited. She is the *Grace Jones*—Captain Wilks—"

"Good old Wilks!"

"—an' she was somewhere today, I dunno, five hundred miles off Barranquila Inlet nor'nor'east something. Anyhow she cruise around till Monday, when she think she land the arms; an' as soon's she come inside the territorial waters—what a word!—naturally you confiscate."

"You sure about those machine guns?" demanded President Bo.

"Sure."

"Because if she really got 'em, we take 'em, an' I use that part of the army appropriations to buy my other wife some Summer clothes an' things like that. She

says she don't got a rag. Only then if I do, an' this ship ain't carryin' any—"

"She got ten Lewis guns packed like sewin' machines," said Ramon, "an' ten Chauchats."

"An' how many rifles?"

"Twenty thousand, an' two million cartridges. Then the four field guns an' the two howitzers, an' that's all. I thought it would be fun," said Ramon pensively, "to make 'em buy a mountain battery. You could use it nicely afterward; but they said, 'No. What the hell! What you tryin' to do?' So I whistled down. Some day I get killed for my sense of humor."

He beamed on the admiral.

"It was a bright idea," said Mr. Clancy, beaming back, "only I wish they'd have shipped them batteries complete with mules. I'd like to think of old Wilks with a deck load of Missouri racehorses. Haw-haw! He'd have twins that time! Say, President, how about a drink?"

"Help yourself. I thought," said Señor Bo, wriggling, "that you didn't drink no more?"

"That was while I was givin' my life to my country," said the admiral, pouring half a pint of pink stuff from the thermos jug into a glass. "I wanted to lay nothin' less than a perfect body on the altar of patriotism. Like our brave boys durin' the War. Well, down the hatch. I'm celebratin' tonight, though; an' besides, I've got that navy so I can handle it drunk *or* sober. That tastes moreish. Whoops, Admiral, look out for your pants. Have some, Ramon?"

"No, thanks. Ladies' drink. Rot my stomach. What you do with this *Grace Jones,* Admiral, after you catch her?"

"Bring her in an' confiscate her. The president can use the rifles, an' I—"

He paused, biting his lip. Ramon, showing white teeth in an encouraging smile, looked up expectantly; so did President Bo.

"You what? You cut this Wilks's throat?" asked Ramon. "You don't like him?"

The admiral shook his head.

"That comes later," he said. "I mean, what I'm goin' to do with the ship except bring her in as a prize. By the way, President, I want Wilks treated nice. He's a darn fool, but he's just had a baby, an' I don't want his wife worried."

"Sure," said Señor Bo sympathetically. "He come an' stay at the palace. My first wife send his wife a cablegram. He play billiards at all? Good. I like men not too brave. You an' Ramon make my inferiority comp—"

"If you didn't think about it so much—" began Mr. Clancy.

"I think about it always," said the president. "At night an' in the daytime. I think about it all the time until, by gosh, you bring that Moreno an' make him ride down the Calle Venida in the second carriage after me! Yes!"

With a wink at Ramon, the admiral arose, put down his glass and eased himself into his uniform.

"All right, sir," he said. "Then let's get to work. Here's El Almirante Clancy in his daredevil an' totally unprecedented stone-throwin' act, knockin' down two separate birds with one an' the same missile. Admission free—no, I think I'll have another of those drinks. Not bad. Rum an' limes, ain't it? Here's how!"

"What you mean about birds?" asked Señor Bo testily. "I thought you puttin' to sea tonight?"

"These ain't that kind of bird," said Mr. Clancy. "I mean, *by* puttin' to sea, I'm *killin'* two birds with one *stone.* Accomplishin' two things with one motion. Killin' two inferiority complexes with one cruise. See?"

"Oh, yes," said Ramon, smiling. "Well, the president's complex is one—"

"Gawblime!" moaned Señor Bo.

"But whose is the other?"

"Mine," said the admiral. He smiled at Ramon, closed the door and was gone.

V

BLUE Monday—in quite the unaccepted sense of the word; Monday morning in the Caribbean, the blues supplied by pellucid water and a sky filled with brilliant sunshine. Over the mirror-like placidity of the sea skimmed, at one level, flying fish, rising before the submarine onslaught of cannibals in green and gold; above them wheeled and volplaned ragged pyramids of gulls. From twelve miles offshore the

eye at bridge height could see lazy rollers dashing themselves into startled activity against Cap Gracias a Dios; while to the north the horizon was a line of incandescent gold.

Through all of which, blind and blunt nosed, and no mean menace to the average chambered nautilus, moved the S. P. S. *Santa Marta*, followed on the starboard quarter by the *Santa Elisa* at six hundred yards' interval; the flotilla as a whole directing its course toward the third visible occupant of the ocean —a rusty looking tramp with high, rawboned bows, a green funnel and a list to port. She had never been a thing of beauty, the *Grace Jones;* and calling her the *Janet Fair* had left her very much as she had been; a fact on which Admiral Clancy, peering at her from the *Santa Marta's* bridge, remarked to Vice-Admiral Hutchins on his right.

"Nice propeller she's got, though," said Mr. Hutchins kind-heartedly.

"Yeah—they got her loaded by the head so's she'll look like she's in ballast. Pinched that idea from Noah, time he was runnin' asses' jawbones to the Samson forces. Yes, it's her all right, the old witch—I was in her to Riga once for grain, the only honest cargo she ever carried, likely. Say, did you get that signal hoisted?"

Mr. Hutchins glanced aloft. From the *Santa Marta's* foremast there snapped indubitably the international code signal for "heave to."

"Yes, sir."

The admiral confirmed his observation.

"So you did," said Mr. Clancy. "Well, damme, I shouldn't be surprised if we made a navy out of this yet. But they ain't heavin' to. Now ain't that sad. Do you suppose Wilks hasn't seen us, or hasn't seen the signal, or is he just bein' plain snooty?"

"We could fire a blank, sir."

"So we could. And yet, I don't think we will. If there's one thing the matter with Wilks, that'll hold him back in his profession an' all that, it is that he needs wakin' up. You know—life is real, an' all that hooey. Moreover I remember that when the *Shaw* got shelled it was his watch below, an' he slept through the whole damn business. He's on the bridge now, an' damn if I don't make him swallow his cud. Give him a shell with my compliments—an' mind it's a blind one, an' mind it's across the bows."

"Which gun, sir?"

"Oh, the bow. Don't let's be stingy in a good cause."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Boom!

Indeed and indeed, the gunnery of the San Pablonian navy had improved in two short months. The bow gun moved heavily on its mounting; to train it required the use of an obsolete instrument known as a gunner's quadrant; and then again—no one being perfect—the captain responsible had forgotten to load this particular weapon when the *Santa Marta* cleared. Despite all of which, it was scarce five minutes from the issuance of the order to fire before the gun gave the bellow aforementioned, belched forth a cloud of black powder smoke which temporarily blinded the bridge and sent a respectably sized round shot very much in the direction ordered.

Through his binoculars—as the sea breeze swept away the fog which encircled him—Admiral Clancy saw the water fifty yards ahead of the *Grace Jones,* and a hundred to the nigh side of her, spurt into an indignant fountain. He saw the ricochetting cannonball rise, whiz across the tramp's line of procedure and fall to its final resting-place with a vast splash and fountain effects; and, almost at once, he saw Mr. Wilks rush across the bridge in the direction of the engine room telegraph.

Yes, that had done the trick. Wilks wasn't taking any chances—not he; good old Wilks. The propeller upon which Vice-Admiral Hutchins had remarked, and of which a good half was visible above the water-line, ceased its noisy thrashing and came to rest.

"She's stopped, sir!" came a yell from below.

Admiral Clancy leaned over the bridge rail.

"Listen, Hutchins!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"You stop that blasted yelling, will you?" asked his superior savagely. "What do you think this is, anyhow? You're supposed to be a flag officer goin' to enforce international law, or some-

thin'. If you got any report to make, you send a man up, navy fashion; an' what's more, get the hell below an' change from those dungarees."

"Say, nobody else could fix that winch," protested Mr. Hutchins, "an' them tails an' things—"

"Shut up! Do as you're told! An' when I go over the side, mind I get every kind of ceremony you ever heard of. I'll take my barge, if it don't leak. Did you get that fixed?"

"Nailed some tin over it this very morning," said the vice-admiral in dudgeon. "An' I couldn't have done that in them damn tails, sir."

"Have it ready to lower in five minutes—an' rig the port accommodation ladder," snapped Mr. Clancy. "An'—hey! Send three or four captains up here, will you? On the run!"

Which is how it occurred that Mr. Wilks, staring incredulously through the *Grace Jones's* signal telescope, perceived one gorgeous officer ringing the *Santa Marta* to dead slow, while another and quite different functionary waved a white glove in instruction to the helmsman, and two more followed, on his various pacings of the warship's bridge, none other than Mr. Wilks's old friend, Clancy. This vision endured for a moment; and then, just as Wilks experienced a flashback of a naked man in a bowler hat and a whisky bottle, it continued in aggravated form.

From under the stern of the *Santa Marta,* now stopped a quarter mile from the *Grace Jones,* there a flashed a boat; rather motheaten about the paint, but rowed with astonishing snap by a crew that tossed oars as it came alongside. Into which, attended not only by the two officers who had followed him about the bridge, but also by a coruscating figure with a white plume in its hat, Mr. Clancy descended by means of a regular staircase.

"We'd better," said the mate from Mr. Wilks's elbow, "rig ours, don't you think?"

"Our what?"

"Our accommodation ladder. He can't shin up a rope in that hat, an' from what I've heard of him, he ain't goin' to take it off for you."

"I've seen him when he didn't have a stitch to his back," said Mr. Wilks weakly. "Well—p'raps you're right."

"Was you ever in one of those South American jails?" asked the mate.

"No! Certainly not!"

"Well, if you had been," said the mate, departing, "you'd know damn well I was right. Rats you get anyway; but if we don't treat this bird nice, it's liable to be snakes too. Hi, there, you Jones! Take Casey an' Schmalz an' rig the accommodation ladder! An' snappy, unless you want your buttocks in your brains! Yes, sir. This near the equator it pays to be polite."

Not, it may be noted, that Mr. Wilks had a chance to be anything else. Descending, rather feebly, the bridge-ladder as the barge came alongside, he reached the main deck to find himself as nothing on his own ship. On either side of the accommodation ladder there posted themselves, before his blinking blue eyes, four stalwart San Pablonian sailors, each fully five feet in stature, and armed with rifles. From between these files, to the sharp rattle of presented arms, came two captains whom Wilks vaguely remembered to have seen elsewhere, in some other life; then the vice-admiral—Hutchins, that was; old Hutchins the boatswain, whom he, Wilks, had ordered around; and then—the incredible apotheosis of Mr. Clancy who *had* once worn a bowler hat, and *had* drunk whisky out of the neck of the bottle.

"YOU'RE the *Grace Jones,* out of Liverpool," stated this vision sharply. "I inform you that you are within the territorial waters of the Republic of San Pablo, and suspected of intent to land arms and munitions in contravention of the treaty of—er—1879. What is your cargo, where are your papers, and why did you not stop when signaled?"

"M-m-m-machinery," said Mr. Wilks from a dry throat.

"Captain Wilson!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Take two men an' examine the cargo. Captain, if you'll lead the way, I will inspect the ship's papers. Admiral Hutchins!"

"Sir!"

"You will detach two men to escort me. You will stay here with the rest, and fire in case of resistance. The crew is formally under arrest."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And now, Captain," said Mr. Clancy severely, "at your convenience, sir!"

To which, when the charthouse door had shut on the two sentries posted outside, he added the incongruous remark:

"Hello, fat boy. I told you so, didn't I? And now how's tricks by you?"

"Ggggggg—" said Mr. Wilks, and seated himself heavily on the settee.

At no time a man of rapid or extensive perceptions, he was now experiencing something of the sensations of a millionaire who finds himself in jail; an incredulous, fourth-dimensional feeling inhibitive of speech. Throughout this trip he had known that Mr. Clancy was admiral in San Pablo; he had known that interruption of his mission by the San Pablonian navy was possible; and he had been quite well aware that such interruption would mean an encounter with his former shipmate. Theoretically. But this was practise. Here he was, aboard his own ship, arrested; and here was Mr. Clancy of the bowler hat and the whisky bottle, in tangible plumes and gold lace, actually doing the arresting and saying, "I told you so."

Mr. Wilks swallowed something and felt better; but still his eyes would not focus.

"Matter of fact," said his visitor, hanging his cocked hat on the wireless direction finder, "I don't want to see your damn papers, Wilks. I know just what you've got aboard, and where you're goin' to land it; an' no matter what your papers show, you're arrested an' goin' to be taken to San Pablo an' confiscated. So why spend a lovely day like this arguin'? I suppose old Parkins told you not to make too much of a fuss if you was caught, didn't he? Figurin' to make an international blackmailin' incident out of you, huh?"

Mr. Clancy helped himself to a cigaret from a yellow package and smiled diabolically.

"See, silly?" he inquired, letting smoke trickle from his nostrils. "I gave you your chance, an' look what you did with it. You could ha' been comin' aboard yourself now, all glitterin' like me an' Hutchins, an' bossin' you around, an' puttin' sentries over yourself, an' havin' a swell time generally. But faint heart never won a soft job, so—"

Mr. Wilks arose.

"Shut up," he said through his teeth.

"Eh?"

"I said 'Shut up'!" cried the captain of the *Grace Jones*. His plump fingers interlaced and writhed. "Go ahead an' arrest me, an' confiscate the ship, an' get me blacklisted, Clancy, but don't you go mockin' me for what I couldn't help! You think I didn't want to come with you because I didn't have any guts, don't you? Well, you have a wife an' a couple of kids an' another one comin', an' see which takes the most guts: to fly off like you did an' have a swell time, all over medals an' gold lace an' things, or stay—"

Mr. Wilks swallowed something else. Twice. Indeed, had he not been that most masculine of mortals, a sailor, the casual observer might have thought him on the verge of tears.

"I've always wanted—" he said in a shaky voice; and had another swallow. "I tried the Cunard an' all them lines. Didn't have table manners enough. No chance in the navy. But if you think—"

"Hey!" said Admiral Clancy. "Hey! Steady, boss. That's all right, Wilkie. I was only kiddin' you. Say, listen. I understand—"

"Yeah," said Mr. Wilks, sitting down again and resting his chin on his fists. "I keep away from what I want to do, an' let you think I'm a horse's neck—an' what for? Just so my kids'll have a chance to grow up like I am—fed to the teeth; never gettin' any fun out of life. To hell with it! Go ahead. Slam me in jail. Bring on your rats an' serpents. See if I care. I'm no good."

"Sure you—"

"No, I'm not!" shouted Mr. Wilks hysterically. "I'm no good! I got no guts! All I got's children, an'—"

A knock fell on the charthouse door.

"Stay there," said the admiral, watching Mr. Wilks's unconventional use of a window curtain. "What's the matter?"

"Ship bearin' down on us, sir!" came the voice of Vice-Admiral Hutchins, slightly agitated. "A warship."

"A warship?"

"Yes, sir. An' unless I'm mistaken, it's the *Pedro Gonzales* from Redondo, sir. She's all broke out with flags, sir, an' I think—"

The two sentries presented arms as the admiral dashed forth to the bridge. Behind him, red eyed and with fingers still twisting together, came Mr. Wilks.

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Mr. Hutchins pessimistically, "if she meant us a piece of no good."

"Give me those glasses!"

"Yes, sir. The way I should figure it," continued the vice-admiral, "is that he's come runnin' out to see that those rifles an' stuff get landed safely—"

"What's MPQ mean in code?" demanded Mr. Clancy. "Anybody know?"

"Somethin' unpleasant, likely. What I was sayin', sir—"

"I don't care what you was sayin'," observed the admiral, lowering his binoculars and glaring at Mr. Hutchins, "I want to see you do somethin'. Get the boardin' party together an' have my barge ready to go back to the flagship."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Quick! You, Wilks, I've told you you're under arrest. Are you goin' to stay that way, or do I have to take you along with me? If you stay here, I want your word you won't try to escape while I'm busy with this other feller. An' I would stay here, if I was you. There's liable to be shootin'."

"All right," said Mr. Wilks. "Can't I move out of the line of fire?"

"If you have to—an' if there is any. But if you start shiftin' anywhere else, I'll hit a shell right plumb into your engine room, Mister, an' don't you forget it. I've slept two months in bunks like menageries to catch hold of this hooker, an' I'm not—"

"On deck!" rose a dry howl from below; and without further remarks the admiral hastened down the bridge ladder. Still somewhat dazed, Mr. Wilks saw him rowed rapidly back to the *Santa Marta;* saw him—and the whole boat's crew—hastily mount the accommodation ladder. The barge, in defiance of all proper practise, remained, crewless, alongside. Mr. Clancy appeared on the bridge; and almost at once the *Santa Marta's* semaphore began working with insane speed. Mr. Wilks could make no sense out of its flappings—probably, he thought, because the message would be in Spanish; nor could—aboard the *Pedro Gonzales*—the high admiral of Redondo, who thought it must be code addressed to the *Santa Elisa.* As a matter of fact, it was neither, nor anything else.

Mr. Clancy, rather white around the nostrils and with his lips compressed into a thin pink line, was merely gaining time while fourteen captains changed clothes with common sailors. Considerable time was necessary for this; and when it was finally accomplished the result was far from beautiful. San Pablonians do not run into the larger sizes; and the former crew of the *Joan Shaw* averaged a good six feet.

"Hutchins," said the admiral, as the seemingly knickerbockered staff paraded shamefacedly on the foredeck.

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell them," said the admiral, looking over the heads of his officers at the distant *Pedro Gonzales,* "that they look like hell, but that they're goin' to have some fun. I don't want that paddle-wheeled bumboat over there slammin' round shot at us an' gettin' our paint all bruised up. So I'm goin' aboard to talk to their admiral. They'll stay below as the barge's crew till I call them, an' then *they'll* come aboard. After that, whatsoever their hand findeth to do, they will do with all their might. Probably the hand had better have somethin' in it, such as a wrench or a belayin' pin, or the like of that. Official; Clancy, Admiral. Promulgate it."

"Do what with it, sir?"

"Never mind," said Mr. Clancy balefully. "I said 'promulgate it'; but they heard what I said anyhow, an' there's no time to lose. Hutchins!"

"Sir!"

"Skin up to the wireless house. What time is it now?"

"Four bells, sir—a little after."

"Wireless President Bo that we've been interfered with on the high seas, an' tell him to have war declared before two this afternoon," said the admiral. "Fly toward it, you slackback lot of soldiers! Get somethin' in your fists an' pile into the boats. Where's Robinson?"

"Below, sir. Engine room."

"Tell him to come up with that wrench of his. I'll have somebody proper for him to use it on. Hutchins, you're in command here. Did you signal for the gang off the *Santa Elisa?*"

"Yes, sir. All but Hansen an' one engineer. They're alongside, gettin' out of their boat into the barge.

"That'll make—seventeen less four's thirteen, an' me's fourteen," said the admiral to himself, "an' that ought to be enough. You keep your eye on us through the glasses, Hutchins, an' if they seem to be gangin' us too much, run the *Santa Marta* alongside an' make the crew board. Only look out for the paint."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Well, that bein' the case," said Mr. Clancy, tucking his sword well out of the way and slipping on two pairs of heavy brass knuckle-dusters, "I guess we might as well be on our way. By-by, Hutchins."

"Goodby, sir. Good luck!"

WHEREAFTER, Mr. Wilks noting the change of crew and rubbing his eyes incredulously, the admiral's barge was manned again and pulled over to the *Pedro Gonzales,* now at rest on the water half a mile away. It disappeared behind the Redondian gunboat's port paddlebox; a bugle blew; and across the sun flecked water sounded an amateurish ruffle of drums.

On the quarterdeck of the *Gonzales* Mr. Clancy faced a brother admiral evidently clothed by the same tailor, but with a blue plume in his cocked hat instead of a red one.

"You got interpreter?" he inquired, supplementing his pidgin with the motion of handing the Redondian admiral his tonsils.

Señor de los Angeles smiled.

"Do we need one?" he inquired. "I only speak English, but I think I can understand you very well."

"English?" demanded Mr. Clancy. "Why, what the hell d'you think I speak?"

"American," said the admiral.

The two flag officers stood eye to eye.

"Oh, yeah?" said he of San Pablo.

The gentleman from Redondo smiled. He had an irritating smile, acquired during a sojourn at Oxford; and his descent from Spanish grandees had endowed him with an equally irritating nose—a slim, finely chiseled, aquiline affair which seemed almost transparent in the bright sunshine. Mr. Clancy's gaze fastened upon this feature, which no doubt inspired his next remark.

"Oh, yeah?" he repeated. "Snooty, are you?"

Still Señor de los Angeles remained silent. Still he smiled.

"Then perhaps you'll tell me," said Mr. Clancy, staring at the nose with the hypnotized eyes of a yogi over a crystal, "what you're doin' in our territorial waters, flyin' a bunch of rude flags an' buttin' in on what don't concern you?"

"If I were in your territorial waters, I might," said Señor de los Angeles, "but since you're in ours, possibly you'll explain how it is that I find you stopping a cargo vessel proceeding to the port of Redondo on legitimate business."

"She's bound for Barranquila Inlet with a cargo of munitions!"

"Pardon me. Redondo, with machinery."

"Like hell!"

"Have you examined her papers?"

"I've examined her cargo," said Mr. Clancy. "An' it is machines—machine guns. Also I've arrested her, an' her crew, an' her captain. An' I'm goin' to take 'em back to San Pablo with me for confiscation."

"Excuse me."

Mr. Clancy breathed hard through his own nose and stared at the perigee of his companion's nasal parabola.

"All right," he said. "You're excused. But hurry back."

"I did not mean that," said Señor de los Angeles. "I meant that, though sorry to contradict you, I find myself unable to agree to your proposed course of action. I consider the ship in question free to come and go as she pleases, and she will not accompany you to the port of San Pablo."

"She won't?"

"No."

"Says who?"

Señor de los Angeles looked pained.

"Why, I say so," he explained. "Sure-

ly you heard me?"

"Yeah, I heard you," said Mr. Clancy. "But suppose I didn't believe you. Then what?"

The admiral shrugged.

"It would be an international incident," he said wearily. "Under my instructions, I should take appropriate action."

"You wouldn't be violent, would you, Arthur?"

"My name is not Arthur," said Señor de los Angeles, "and I may point out that I am not in command of an armed vessel for the purpose of avoiding any measures it may be necessary to take."

"Then if we arrest the *Grace Jones* there'll be trouble?"

"You do so at your own risk."

"Are you going to stop smilin' at me that way?" demanded Mr. Clancy.

"What?"

"That way—with your bugle all wrinkled up! I don't like it!"

"Sir!"

"I've arrested the *Grace Jones,*" said Mr. Clancy, crouching slightly at the shoulders, "an' what's more, I beg to inform you that you're under arrest for bein' in our territorial waters without a fishin' license."

Señor de los Angeles laid hand to his sword.

"Guard!" he called suddenly in Spanish. "Guar—"

And then—as he gained the impression that his fellow admiral was yelling loudly for some unknown persons to fly toward something—his world exploded about him.

Starting from that very spot on his Castilian nose which Señor Clancy had been inspecting with such histological fervor, an earthquake overtook Señor de los Angeles, its tremors spreading with extraordinary electrical effects into every limb; and merging into a sort of phychological millennium where birds sang and stars revolved visibly in their courses. Quite without knowledge that he had flown several feet through the air, and was now lying wrapped tightly around the pedestal of the standard compass, the high admiral of Redondo dreamed on; while his assailant, tearing off cocked hat and tunic, charged raging upon his flagship's crew.

VI

IT WAS at this point that the honest chronicler, endeavoring to present historical facts without bias, finds himself bogging down heavily in a mass of official and contradictory documents. From the Redondian point of view,* El Almirante Clancy, a low grade foreigner and a known stealer of dirty garments from blind washerwomen, boarded the *Pedro Gonzales* under a flag of truce and made a treacherous attack on Admiral de los Angeles while the latter was discussing a question of international law.

Having accomplished which outrage, and with the assistance of several hundred other foreigners of habits equally unnatural, the said Clancy then outnumbered, surrounded, outflanked and assaulted the crew of the said *Pedro Gonzales* while such crew was otherwise engaged; all this between 11:20 and 11:45 G.M.T, before a state of war had been declared to exist, and within Redondian waters.

From which statements, official sources in San Pablo feel compelled to dissent in several particulars; notably, those concerning the attitude of Admiral de los Angeles, whose moral character is dealt with at some length; the numerical strength of the heroes involved—officially but erroneously given as six; the treatment of the defeated crew; the time of the engagement (said to be 2:47 P.M. G.M.T.) and the ships' positions—alleged to be ten miles on the San Pablo side of Cap Gracias a Dios.

There can, however, be no doubt that for some minutes, no matter what the time of day, the treacherous or self-defensive Mr. Clancy found himself outnumbered at least eight to one on the quarterdeck alone; and this by enemies armed with rifles, bayonets, automatic pistols and cutlasses; to wit, the personal guard upon whom Admiral de los Angeles had been calling at the time of the disputed incident. Who, according to their own story before the board of inquiry tried earnestly and indeed painstakingly to kill or maim the admiral's assailant—unfortunately without effect.

Between, for instance, the moment

*Istoria de la Republica de Redondo da S. P. de Ribera, 400 pp. 8vo, Redondo, 1931.

when his commanding officer fell, and the other moment when he himself was picked up by the scruff of the uniform trousers and thrown over the taffrail, Petty Officer de Castro had fired five shots; Leading Seaman Ramos de la Torre, six shots from his pistol; and Seaman, Second Class, Alfredo Moro, four shots, one of which pierced Señor Clancy's trousers leg, while another made a dent in a fighting top.

Meeting in the water under the *Gonzales's* stern, these three witnesses deposed to having agreed that Señor Clancy was the devil in person, and that they had better get aboard again before sharks bit them. This they did via the accommodation ladder, and went below to the boiler room to dry their clothes. For this reason they could give no details of the fight which they noticed as raging in the vicinity of the forward turret; and were accordingly excused from the witness stand.

Recalled, Seaman Moro stated that the admiral's barge was still at the foot of the ladder; but was empty. He had the impression that the number of foreigners who had boarded the *Gonzales* from it was well into the hundreds, and all in short trousers. One threw something at him; he thought it was a pipe wrench, but did not examine the object because of his haste to reach the boiler room. Was subject to colds on the chest; sneezed for the Honorable Court, and was excused again.

There was much to be said about those strangers in short pants and their method of discussing international law. In the first place, they fought sea battles as if they were on land; and not only on land, but in some low resort such as a wine shop.

First Lieutenant Maximilano Silva, appearing with his head bandaged and bursting into tears midway through his testimony, deposed to having had one invader spit in his eye while another took his sword from him and a third struck him over the head with an empty bottle. This last was the person who had thrown the pipe wrench at Seaman Moro, and who would have been shot by the platoon under witness's command had he not suddenly charged the said platoon, snatched two rifles from the hands of sailors aiming at him and, with one of these weapons clubbed in either hand, driven the remainder below decks. It was when witness protested that the bottle came into use.

AND there were similar stories; the best, perhaps, that of Quartermaster, First Class, Patricio Emanuele O'Sullivan, who came into contact with Admiral Clancy just after that gentleman had dealt with the quarter guard, and before the crew of the barge came aboard.

At this period, Señor Clancy had lost his shirt and one leg of his trousers, was bleeding from both nostrils and one ear, but seemed happy. Witness tripped him up, fell on him and was endeavoring to bite his jugular vein when interrupted by a blow on the back of the head. Finding this to have been delivered by a pipe wrench similar to that thrown at Seaman Moro, witness arose and discovered himself to be in the midst of a group of seventy or eighty foreigners in short pants, all of whom fell upon him. Knew that he had knocked three teeth out of one, and kicked two more in the stomach; but was finally overpowered, hit over the head with a rifle butt and thrown into the after gun turret, already occupied by twelve able seamen and the ship's cat. Endeavored to persuade these to come out and fight, but without success; and was on his way to the magazine, for the purpose of blowing the ship up, when overpowered and hit over the head with a chair.

Questioned by the president, witness admitted maltreating his fellow sailors in the gun turret; said that he had been quite aware that firing the magazine would damage government property; and was promptly dismissed with a reprimand.

After which, and much more, the court found that the capture of the battleship *Pedro Gonzales* had been marked by treachery and contrary to the usages of civilized warfare; a conclusion in which, had they known it, they had been anticipated by none other than El Almirante Clancy himself, in the very moment of victory.

"Did you see that?" the admiral had asked of Captain Robinson as, together,

they slammed the last hatch on the last member of the *Gonzales's* crew.

"What?"

"That last feller—sayin' he had fourteen children an' then throwin' that cuspidor at me. Now just for that," said Mr. Clancy, "I'll show that darn republic who's king. Listen, Robinson. You can run these engines, can't you?"

Mr. Robinson explored a nigrescent eye.

"Guess so. I'm fond of puzzles."

"I'll send Hutchins across to do the navigatin'—all you got to do is follow me. You other fellers go around these decks an' pick these unconscious birds up an' put 'em out of the way. They look untidy. Then tivvy around an' see if the guns are loaded; an' if they ain't, load 'em. Where's my cocked hat?"

It was brought to him. Owing to the lumps raised upon his head by the efforts of Quartermaster O'Sullivan, it was no longer a perfect fit, seeming inclined to pitch fore and aft with every motion of its wearer's jaws; and moreover it had lost its crimson plume and been lain on by somebody who was bleeding; yet indisputably it added to Mr. Clancy's authority. When one's clothing has diminished to a fractional suit of underwear every little bit helps.

"Where are we goin'?" one of the staff demanded; as his superior put the hat on, adding a moment later, "Er—sir!" and retreating in bad order. The admiral disdained to answer.

"Half of you," he ordered, Beelzebub in person staring out of his one practicable eye, "stay here an' tidy up. Other half come with me. Man that barge! I'll teach 'em to throw cuspidors at me, the———"

Which he did by appearing with all three warships off the harbor of Redondo; and by wireless announcing his immediate intention of shelling that city; a procedure which must have subjected him to dire consequences, had the coast batteries—of whose existence Mr. Clancy seemed either ignorant or contemptuous—been up to even their usual form of one hit in twenty at five hundred yards.

But by chance—or by fiat of that spirit which writes histories—the coast artillery was on strike; the 2nd Regiment of Infantry (usually used to coerce the coast artillery) was up in the hills chasing Indians who had failed to pay their 1929 salt tax; and so the cabinet, in session to consider San Pablo's declaration of war, had no alternative but to accept armistice, and to order the white flag hoisted on the capitol's brand new flagpole. This at 3:04 P.M; President Moreno meantime weeping bitterly and packing his more urgent personal necessities into a handbag, with which he was at 3:20 received aboard the San Pablonian flagship *Santa Marta*—fugitive from a mob which not only said that he had betrayed his country, but which went so far as to cast doubts on the validity of his baptism.

That (he explained to Mr. Clancy as two-thirds of the fleet steamed homeward) was what hurt him. It was over this, and not over his country's humiliating defeat, that he wept two hours later in the harbor of San Pablo, before an audience composed of Admiral Clancy, President Bo and Mr. Wilks of the *Grace Jones*. It was his view that Redondo, as a country which would impeach its chief executive for borrowing a mere hundred thousand pesos from the treasury, deserved what was coming to it. Indeed, one saw the connection; impeachment that very morning—war that afternoon. But that a good, pious man like himself should be taunted—

President Bo stared solemnly at his enemy. He himself had come out in state to meet his argosies—on, to be exact, Munitions Barge No. 2, now loading arms from the confiscated *Grace Jones;* he had been accompanied by a brass band—still merrily playing "Valencia" amid the thud of rifle cases; he had been acclaimed by innumerable thousands of his constituents in a state of ecstasy; he would be received on his return by innumerable thousands more, plus a cardboard triumphal arch under which he would drive in a brougham; and he had eaten strawberries for lunch without itching. From a life so full of rewards, what niggard could grudge a dole to a brother in distress?

"Don't cry, José," said President Bo, laying hand on the vanquished shoulder. "Looky the birds shining, an' the sun singing, an' anyhow, the way your frock

coat bulges, you got away with fifty thousand pesos gold in that money belt—"

A convulsive movement of President Moreno informed the comforter that his words had borne fruit. He seated himself, beamed on the assembly and folded his hands on his stomach.

"So what the hell. Give him a drink, Clancy. Give me a drink. Let's all have a drink. What you done with your uniform, Clancy, my hero? Captain Wilks, you play billiards? Good. Clancy, you wireless me you capture two ships, eh? Then with two ships you had, that makes four. But coming out on my barge I count six ships."

MR. CLANCY, preparing refreshment for his Excellency, paused and recanted half the poured portion into the bottle.

"How that can be, my hero Clancy? You fight some more wars on your way home?"

"No, an' I left the *Pedro Gonzales* at Redondo," said Mr. Clancy, acting generously by Wilks and Señor Moreno, "with one of our crews aboard. All natives—very unforgivin'. She'll stay there until the peace treaty's carried out. See?"

"Then that only makes three ships?"

"Yeah."

"But I see six!"

"Yeah," said Mr. Clancy. "You're stewed."

"Who, me?" said his Excellency.

He began to laugh. He had a pleasant laugh, had President Bo; a fat, easy running cachinnation which gave the impression—particularly on this occasion—of having been well oiled. And it continued. It continued until Mr. Wilks, looking confiscated in his corner, smiled, grinned, chuckled and joined in; until President Moreno, at first sitting ramrod-like to conceal his assets, let the corners of his mouth twitch and then suddenly snorted into his glass. Within two minutes the admiral's cabin was a welter of merriment, amid which the admiral alone sat grave and indeed forbidding.

"What's—" began President Bo; and interrupted himself with thirty seconds of helpless mirth. "What's the matter, my Clancy?"

Tears glittered suddenly in the presidential eyes.

"Why, you're not happy? Clancy, you're never happy since you come here. I make you an admiral, I give you lots of medals. I pay you a big salary—"

"In gold," said the admiral emphatically.

"—a big salary," continued Señor Bo, somewhat dashed, "and now you're a hero. An' I got half a dozen more medals for you, an' a triumphant arch only used twice before, an' girls to sock you in the eye with bouquets, an' I fix you so you get hardening of the arteries this one evening alone, gawblime, an' never you smile since you been here, an' you don't smile now. Whassmarr', Clancy?"

"You heard," said the admiral meaningly, "what I said about bein' paid in gold?"

"But you don't—" began Señor Bo, spreading out his hands.

"Yes, I do. I want it. In gold. And right now."

"But—"

"Listen. I know you presidents. I know where you carry your fall money. If you want to see me crack a smile, just undo your shirt an' pull out that money belt an' hand me over twelve hundred United States bucks or equivalent. I been here three months at a hundred dollars a week, an'—"

Señor Bo's face changed suddenly.

"Money belt!" he exclaimed. "You right, Clancy! You fight a great war, gawblime; you get paid for it right now. I be generous. What the hell? I give you fifteen hundred dollars—three hundred bonus. Moreno, pay him."

The president of Redondo put down his glass. Also he turned very pale.

"Pay him?"

"Yes."

"You don't want to forget," said Mr. Clancy warningly, "that I get somethin' else besides my salary. I told you there was somethin' you hadn't got yet, but that I was goin' to get for you; an' that when I got it for you, it'd be mine. Don't try to put me off with any bonuses!"

"Clancy," said President Bo, "you can have anything you like. I give you

the bonus because you are a hero. Don't get impatient. If Moreno don't unbutton himself soon, I have him shot an' we take it at the what you say—chop up—autopsy. But he's nice feller—"

There was an interlude, marked from outside by the playing of "There'll Be A Hot Time In The Old Town Tonight," and within the cabin by the riffling of bills. An appropriate conjunction, more or less, since the band thought they were playing the American national anthem and the bills were United States bills. With one thousand-dollar example, and five of one hundred dollars each, Mr. Clancy professed himself satisfied.

"An' I take the rest," said Señor Bo, stuffing the money belt into his pocket, "for safe keeping, you know. Lot of damn thieves about, especially when we give great parade, like tonight. Clancy, what you do for a uniform? Them black eyes I get painted at the Municipal Opera House, but—"

"You better go get yourself dressed," said the admiral.

"I am dressed. See my tie? But we're goin' to fire twenty-one gun salutes, Clancy, so you *got* to have trousers."

"I won't disgrace you," said the hero of the hour cryptically.

President Bo arose; then sat down and rose again, making a better job of it.

"Captain Wilks," he said imperially, "you come with me. We play billiards until the parade starts. Seven o'clock. Señor Moreno, you follow me at a distance of two paces, looking humble. Maybe if you're a good boy I make you a present of my old inferiority complex, having no further use for same. Clancy, I'm sorry, but when you come ashore tonight, I'll have to kiss you."

Mr. Wilks looked horrified at his captor; but no thunderbolts issued.

"Sure," said Mr. Clancy, opening the door and leaning easily against the bulkhead, "when I come ashore."

"That's nice of you, Clancy. We both get feelin' good, an' then we don't mind it, eh? You wash you face clean, an—"

"Meantime you're not forgettin' that I get somethin' else besides my pay an' that bonus?"

"Certainly. Anythin' you like I didn't have before you got it for me," said Señor Bo. "Except the dark girl in the second row of—"

"No," said the admiral.

"Then anything. An' now, Wilks, you take my arm because I like you—an' this ship is ruddy unsteady."

With which the president of victorious San Pablo regained his barge, already stacked with the rich cargo of the *Grace Jones*, and returned to where glory waited.

IT WAS just as a roar of cheering announced his resetting of foot upon his native soil that the admiral responsible for the fiesta appeared at the door of his cabin and summoned Vice-Admiral Hutchins, that old war dog lately in command of the captured *Pedro Gonzales*.

"Get me some clothes," said Mr. Clancy, looking out across the sunlit water.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Slops if you can find any to fit. Otherwise the trousers anyhow off that admiral I knocked out."

"Yes, sir."

"Signal for that barge to come back," said the commander, still staring with a strange intensity past his subordinate, "an' take the men off the *Grace Jones*."

"Aye, aye."

"Then collect all our old crew an' get 'em aboard her. If you need help, call me. I'd try to lure 'em, though, if I was you."

"Aboard the *Grace Jones*, sir?"

"Yes."

The admiral's eyes, which as a matter of fact had been fixed upon that vessel, now detached themselves, and fastened hypnotically upon those of the vice-admiral.

"The republic," said he, "has kind of got grateful, Hutchins, an' the *Grace Jones* is their way of showin' it. They've given her to me."

"G-g-g-iven—?"

"Yeah," said the admiral, smiling.

He took a deep breath and folded his arms.

"An' while they're pullin' off this parade tonight," he said "we sail."

"S—sail, sir?"

"Yeah."

"F—for anywhere in particular, sir?"

"Yeah," said Mr. Clancy, turning on his heel. "Liverpool!"

VII

AND so, slowly, carefully, with much the same dubious gait as had marked the progress of the *Joan Shaw* on an earlier occasion, the *Grace Jones* in her turn came out of the Channel mists into the early morning sunshine of the upper Mersey.

To starboard, its sharp bow and forward quick-firer cocked like the eye of a couchant police dog, lay a torpedo boat destroyer; to port a Cunard boat, fat bellied and well kept, the national and marine counterpart of an old lady's shopping bag. And there, midway between the law and the profits, the *Grace Jones* groaned with her siren, anchored, and for the first time in nearly four weeks removed her gross weight from the mind of Admiral Clancy, S.P.N. (retired).

Down in his cabin, fully dressed for shoregoing save for a bowler hat whose crown he stroked affectionately while Vice-Admiral Hutchins (retired) absorbed a drink, Mr. Clancy for the second time considered himself to have done fairly well, and said so.

Mr. Hutchins regarded him.

"Glad you're pleased, sir," he said, and took a brooding sip. "There's them as ain't."

"There's been them as wasn't," said Mr. Clancy airily, "all the way across. There's been them as didn't care much for the victuals, an' there's been them as thunk they was still captains in the navy; an' accordingly there's been them as caught it where the chicken caught the ax. Because there's been him as could whip the whole bunch of them single-handed."

"It never came to that," said Mr. Hutchins, looking into his glass. "An' even six or eight of 'em gave you a pretty good dustin', sir. If it hadn't been for me comin' in with them two links of anchor chain an' layin' about pretty heavy, there'd worse have happened to you than them three busted ribs an' a broken finger, an' them couple of cuts in the scalp."

"That was before I paid them," said Mr. Clancy.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well—" said Mr. Hutchins. He looked up. "I'm kind of in an awkward position, sir. I ain't an officer, an' by rights I oughtn't to be here. Yet I don't hold with the men, an' so— What I mean, sir, I believe you about the money, an' I figure we been well paid. But—"

Mr. Clancy seated himself.

"Oh, yeah?" he inquired. "You believe me about the money, do you? You mean you believe I coughed up all there was an' divided it fairly, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's a good job, anyhow. But the others don't, eh—even though they got twice what ought to have been comin' to 'em?"

"They don't believe you'd leave yourself penniless, sir."

"They don't, eh? Well, they're quite right. I've got," said Mr. Clancy, investigating, "about eleven and fourpence, English money—an' my health an' strength."

"Yes, sir. But since that wireless come in—"

"What wireless?"

"The one from President Bo, sir. Sayin' about certainly this ship was yours, an' about Mr. Wilks bein' his new admiral—"

"Well? Do they wish they was back there, servin' under Wilks?"

"No, sir. But they think that since you divvied up the money, you ought to divvy up the ship."

"Oh, they do, eh?"

Mr. Clancy's lips settled into a thin line.

"Hutchins, didn't I explain that to them? That I wasn't takin' any share in the money, because I was gettin'—"

"Yes, sir. But they don't believe it, sir; an' anyhow, they're claimin' that it ain't fair, them gettin' a lousy hundred dollars each, an' you a ship worth—"

"Well, what is she worth?"

Mr. Hutchins finished his drink.

"I dunno, sir," he said pessimistically. "But the way they was talkin' last night—"

"Who was talkin' last night?"

A violent shove flung the cabin door wide open; and in the doorway appeared the form of Mr. Robinson, late of the San Pablonian navy, now functioning as third engineer and armed with the proper instrument of his office, to wit a wheel wrench. Behind him, crowding the alleyway, showed other ex-officers in undress.

"Who was talkin'?" asked Mr. Robinson sternly. "Why, I was, Clancy. An' I'm talkin' now."

The admiral arose.

"It's a better thing to do than eavesdroppin'," he said softly, "but it's apt to be kind of dangerous at that. Pass at your own risk, Robinson. What have you got to say?"

"It's what we've all got to say," said the engineer. "An' that stool pigeon in the corner's told you what it is already. We—"

"You talkin' about me?" asked Mr. Hutchins, rising in his turn.

"Yeah!"

"Yah!" said the many-headed from outside. "Ole sneak Hutchins! Officers' pet!"

"Why, you—"

"Shut up, Hutchins," said Mr. Clancy. "You want shares in this ship, I understand. Say a funnel each, or a winch or so."

"That ain't funny, Clancy!"

"Certainly ain't. It's pathetic."

"Oh, yeah? Well, try this on your patheticola, Clancy. We not only want a share in this ship, but we're goin' to have it; an' you're not goin' ashore until you've signed a paper agreein'—"

"Says who?"

"Says all of us!"

"An' who'll stop me?"

"We will!"

"An' what'll I be doin' all that time?"

Mr. Robinson smiled wolfishly. Also he swung his wheel wrench with a delicate balancing motion from side to side.

"Well, what will you be doin'?"

"Well, for a starter," said Mr. Clancy, "somethin' like—say—*this!*"

Which was, in its simplest statement, the hurling of a whisky bottle, and the subsequent rushing of the doorway; a process to which, however, no simple statement can do appropriate justice.

To make a stout fellow like Mr. Robinson not only abandon all thought of such playthings, but actually to throw his feet toward the ceiling in an ecstasy of unconsciousness, required virtuosity in the thrower; great strength combined with an accuracy that made sure the heavier bottom of the bottle should strike the target precisely between the eyes. And so with the subsequent rush. Any blunderer, any hanger-on of the fringes of the delicate art of free-for-all, can make a rush; but in the picking up of a man already stunned and firing him chainshot fashion down the alleyway one recognizes the hand of the master.

Having given which evidences of genius, Mr. Clancy set himself to the taking—and distributing—of infinite pains. Behind him, hewing the human marble after the master's designs, came the uninspired but faithful Mr. Hutchins, his mallet a curtain pole.

IT WAS quite an argument; not long, perhaps, when judged by the standards applying to other major engagements such as St. Mihiel or the first battle of Bull Run; but remarkable for its intensity and the variegation of method.

There was, for instance, Mr. Hutchins's discovery that a curtain pole, excellent though it may be as a bludgeon, becomes even more effective when used bayonet fashion against solar plexi; and the really strategic discovery by the ship's cook that, if Mr. Clancy could be maneuvered backward up to the galley, he, the cook, could stab him in the back with a carving knife. That this really far-seeing idea resulted merely in the ripping of its objective's new blue suit, and the breakage of the cook's jaw in four places, was the fortune of war.

Even the classics had their influence on the battle; at least one able seaman, disabled by a kick on the kneecap, bit at the ankles of the foe in exactly the manner in vogue at Thermopylæ. And then the humorous, rather sketchily represented by Mr. Clancy's grabbing of a cauldron of boiling soup from the galley stove.

"Huh?" he inquired, posing the cauldron for the cast. "Woof?"

They retreated, and he set it down,

seeming glad of the rest, though somewhat dazed and uncertain of directions. The four ribs previously broken had, of course, come unstuck again, and the pain of them probably was absorbing some of his attention; the cuts on his head had reopened, and the resultant blood was filling one eye; and some one, judging by the look of his once stiff collar, had taken advantage of some moment when he was prone to stamp heavily on the back of his neck. None of which things seemed, however, to be sufficient to account for his failure to see the boatman who had climbed the Jacob's ladder and was now looking over the rail at the scene of carnage. Probably this failure was due to a glancing blow, dealt him early in the combat, by a nine-inch strop block.

"Was it you," asked the boatman mildly, "that was comin' ashore?"

Now Mr. Clancy looked at him.

"Because I can't stay around here all day," said the boatman—he was old, and it was getting on for lunch time—"while you amuse yourself. You owe me half a crown already. An' now I suppose you got to beautify yourself."

Mr. Clancy looked down at himself. Barring the knife slash in its right shoulder and a few bloodstains likewise out of its wearer's sight, the blue suit looked pretty good; and it is a known fact that, once blood has been wiped off the face, a tight fitting bowler hat will prevent the oozing of any more.

"What's the matter—you're gettin' paid for your time," snarled Mr. Clancy, making his arrangements accordingly. "So what you bawlin' about?"

The boatman tried his pipe in the other corner of his mouth.

"I ain't bawlin'," he said. "Where to?"

"Lord Street," said Mr. Clancy. "An' quick!"

AND so, for the second time, he came into the presence of Mr. Parkins—much the same presence he had left three months before, with much the same accessories. King George, dressed in a naval uniform several degrees less gorgeous than that of a San Pablonian admiral, still crossed his gaze with those of Messrs. Halsey, Wall and Wilberforce.

Ship models, Persian carpet, Italian chairs and the flat topped desk with Mr. Parkins's paunch overhanging it—all remained precisely as they had existed in Mr. Clancy's consciousness through the distractions of admiralty, war, conspiracy and private battle; and if the port captain was not occupying his former seat at Mr. Parkins's right hand, his absence was amply compensated for by the increased activity of the man with the gray eyes.

Waving back the two commissionaires and the four clerks who had followed the newcomer into the sanctum sanctorum, this gentleman stepped up close to Mr. Clancy and shoved an automatic pistol violently against his breastbone.

"Want something?" asked the man with the gray eyes.

"Yeah," Mr. Clancy said, "I want to speak to Parkins."

"He's busy."

"Yeah?" asked Mr. Clancy, looking over his interlocutor's head at the object of his longing. "He don't seem to be."

"Well, he is! An—"

Suddenly the head of the gray eyed man snapped backward. Equally suddenly his right wrist, holding the pistol, was caught in a vise-like grip and so twisted that its tendons relaxed and the weapon fell to the floor; and almost simultaneously a vast fist, colliding with his right cheekbone, hurled him into a corner where he lay clucking.

Unemotionally, Mr. Clancy advanced to the flat topped desk.

"Don't," he said to Mr. Parkins, "feel in that drawer. I advise you."

The plump white hand paused, trembling.

"Stand up!"

When that order had been obeyed, Mr. Clancy seated himself. He seated himself in the same Italian chair he had occupied on a previous interview, crossed his knees and sighed. Also he fumbled in the pocket of his knife torn, shoregoing suit and produced a piece of paper; with which, as he considered Mr. Parkins, he delicately tapped his teeth.

"Parkins!" he snapped suddenly.

Mr. Parkins jumped.

"It's against the law—" he began

weakly.

Mr. Clancy arose; and it was evident that in so doing he was abandoning a course of action deliberately laid out for another course dictated by powers beyond his control. He had been going to put on an act; whereof his sitting while Mr. Parkins stood, and his tapping of his teeth with the slightly blood stained piece of paper, had been ingredients; an act spoiled by the resurgence of his inner self. An inner self which, as it uncoiled itself from the Italian chair, seemed to expand Mr. Clancy's size in all three directions, and also to possess a slight Hibernian brogue.

"Against the law, you dough faced ghoul, ye! Who's talkin' about the law? D'ye think I've sailed eight thousand miles, an' got malaria, an' fought two navies an' three mutinies, an' spent me last dollar an' got meself blacklisted from here to Hull an' back, to hear ye squeak about law? It's honor I'm discussin', ye dismal breadworm. Honor!"

Mr. Parkins's pupils dilated. We all have a terror of the unknown.

"When I was here last you owed me fifteen pounds. Fifteen pounds ten. Did ye not?"

"I—"

"Don't lie to me! You owed me fifteen pounds—for services rendered; an' here was I, three months ago, comin' hat in hand to ye like a beggar, an' you sittin' there like a king in the midst of his army. A king! A fine king. Whereas I'm of the blood royal of Ireland. Do ye know that?"

Mr. Parkins's eyes dilated further, with the evident idea that they beheld a madman, and then took on a certain expression of wonder. Strange as it seemed to Mr. Parkins, there was something about this vast and shaggy man with the blood creeping down his forehead from beneath the backflung bowler hat, something about the poise of the taut body under the torn and crumpled suit, that gave Mr. Parkins curious quivers up the spine. Not exactly quivers of fear; he found to his surprise that he was not actually afraid of any bodily harm; not indeed precisely unpleasant quivers. Something like the sensation he had had once in London when the state coach rolled by to Parliament and the band played and the guard presented arms. A shiver of—

"But I'm not here," said Mr. Clancy quietly, "to talk with ye very much. I don't care to. You're not my kind, Mr. Parkins—or ye'd never have done what ye did. You flummoxed me out of my rights, because I was weak at the moment, an' you strong with your gunmen; but that wasn't the worst. You wiped off your dirty conscience on me. You threw me five pound notes an' said, 'Here!' "

"It was a—a—"

"It was a black insult."

There was silence; just such a silence as had fallen three months before after the flinging of the one-pound notes.

"And I'm here at last," said Mr. Clancy, unfolding the paper he had taken from his pocket, "to avenge it. Ah, don't tremble, man. It's nothin' that'll hurt you in your body. Look—here's all it is, a radiogram an' three lines in my best hand of write."

A persistent trickle of blood from the bowler hat interfered with the gaze he wished to turn on Mr. Parkins. Removing the impediment with the back of his hand, he fixed two cool blue eyes on the shipowner and spoke crisply.

"You're a rogue and a thief, Parkins; an' a traitor to the men ye send out in your ships; an' a false hypocrite an' a liar. That's what I think of ye—an' that you'd sell your own mother to Buenos Aires for sixpence. What in God's name ye may be proud about, I don't know; but some pride ye must have, or of course you'd die like anybody else. Well, now, you're a shipowner an' a rich man; an' recently you've lost a ship. The *Grace Jones*. I know, because I captured her. An' see this radio? She's mine. An' see this piece of paper I wrote last night before we anchored in the river? That's to teach you how to throw pound notes at your betters, Parkins.

"I've never been more than a second mate; an' God knows if ever I'll be that much again; but praise Him I can throw away better than five pounds. It's a deed of gift from me to you, Parkins, of the said ship *Grace Jones*."

From a superb motion of Mr. Clancy's gore splashed right hand the paper

floated through the air and came to rest —by three-month-old coincidence—at Mr. Parkins's feet; resting on the toe of his right boot.

"There!" said the donor, and walked sturdily to the door.

VIII

DOWN on the Liverpool waterfront, jammed tightly in between the warehouse of Harrison and Meigs, who are dry-salters, and the even worse smelling emporium of the Great British Hide Company, is the restaurant run by C. Jennings, Prop, for the convenience of impecunious sailormen. It can provide you with eighteen inches of table, an oilcloth, a cut off the joint and two veg for fourpence, or coffee and sausages and mash for twopence halfpenny; and into its portals, at eleven o'clock that same night, came, staggering, the ex-admiral of the San Pablonian navy. He appeared, to the eye of C. Jennings, Prop, who was polishing glasses behind the deserted counter, to have been somewhere and drunk something; indeed, to have been to several places, and mixed his drinks.

He was affectionate, he was jovial, and he wanted sausages and mash, payment to be made in advance; payment to the last halfpenny, even; which after some considerable search through all his pockets he found and presented with the air of one who makes the supreme effort.

"Coffee?" asked C. Jennings.

"No. No money."

Mr. Jennings drew the coffee all the same and, depositing it, eyed his visitor.

"Larst time you was 'ere you tipped me 'arf a crown," he said. "Chawge it to that. It *was* you, wasn't it?"

"Was who?" asked Mr. Clancy.

"You," said C. Jennings, Prop, "you that come in 'ere abaht free munce ago, wiv a crowd of sailors who you said was all goin' to be captings an' admirals an' such like down Sarf America somewhere."

"Were we here?" asked Mr. Clancy.

"Not 'arf. 'Ow you was swearin'! You didn't seem 'appy a bit, an' all the others skylarkin' an' raisin' 'ell. Wot 'appened? Didj' ever get dahn there?"

"Cer'nly. Mustard, please."

"Cross your 'eart? Well, 'ow abaht," demanded Mr. Jennings, folding his fat arms and beaming with expectancy, "that gowld bride, an' all that money you was goin' to get, an' this 'ere war—did you 'ave 'em?"

"Sure did."

"Didj' win the war?"

"Sure."

"No, but strite. Medals?"

"Cer'nly. Loss medals."

"An' got pide proper an' everythin'?"

"Sure. Three hundred pounds. Gave me a ship, too."

"Three 'undred— An' give yer a ship?"

"Uh-huh."

Mr. Jennings considered.

"But you ain't admiral no more?"

"No."

"Nor you ain't got the three 'undred—"

"No. Gimme glass water."

" 'Ave yer got the ship?"

"No. Nothin'. Haven't got a damn cent."

Mr. Jennings, owing to his marine contacts, was not unacquainted with the vicissitudes of fortune; but something about this case appeared to give him pause. Producing the glass of water and watching Mr. Clancy pour it into a thirsty interior, he seemed puzzled about something. He took a long breath.

"You cert'nly was miserable that night you was 'ere before," he said tentatively.

Mr. Clancy, attacking the last sausage, made no reply. He wolfed it, finished the coffee, rose and beamed on C. Jennings, Prop, with a mighty affability.

"An' now you s'y you ain't got a 'ap'ny in the world," said that worthy in an injured tone, "an' you look's as if you was goin' to burst into songs."

His visitor, rather more torn as to the clothing than he had been earlier in the day, his bowler hat fantastically dented in the crown, but his eyes smiling in a rather battered face, turned in the doorway which gave on the empty night.

"That's me all over, bud," said Mr. Clancy benevolently. "Yes, sir. I feel fine!"

THE END

CALLING BACK THE DEAD

By James W. Bennett

DR. LINCOLN sat across the balcony from me, his gray-bearded face occasionally lighted by the glow of his brier pipe. The Shanghai air was almost Summer-like. The first fireflies of the season glimmered in the redolent purple dusk of the university campus. On the lower floor of our building, in which a few of the students roomed, some one was playing a two-stringed fiddle. The *bi-bo* sobbed and moaned with considerable virtuosity, imitating the voice of a Chinese operatic star.

Abruptly a queer, quivering noise penetrated the flower perfumed air. Superficially it resembled a phrase played by the *bi-bo*. The Chinese student with the fiddle, however, had stopped. The entire lower floor had stilled, as if listening. At measured intervals the sound came:

"*Kyuiiiii laaaaay!*" in a high feminine key.

"*Laaaaa-ga!*" A shorter note, masculine in pitch.

Dr. Lincoln jumped to his feet.

"Come on," he said peremptorily. "I may need help."

He crossed my study at a run, picking up his surgical bag which he had left at the door. I followed. Leaving the building, we stood on the bank of Soochow Creek, trying to locate the direction of the sound. It seemed to be coming from a group of mud-brick huts across and down the stream, outside the campus.

The college ferryman awoke as we jumped aboard his sampan. Yawning, he began alternately to tug and push the *yuloh*—the single, huge sculling oar. Scrambling up the bank on the opposite shore, we found that the sounds were coming from a hut set a little distance from the hamlet, in a field dotted with grave mounds. The moon had just risen and, in its pale refulgence, the outline of an aged woman's figure was etched against the ridge of the roof. At the door stood a young man in patched coolie-cloth garments. He stared sightlessly into space, unheeding our arrival.

"*Aung Loong, kyuiiiii laaaay!*" quavered the woman's voice. "O soul of Aung Loong, come back!"

"*Laaaay-ga!*" boomed the man. "Come!"

Dr. Lincoln spoke briskly to him in Chinese:

"Step aside, little brother. This person is the university physician and may be able to help your sick one."

The woman on the roof began to chatter in a cracked, senile voice:

"Go away! Go away, you foreign devils, you sons of loathesome turtles!"

The man, however, after an instant's hesitation, stepped aside from the door. Dr. Lincoln entered. A single candle lighted a low pallet upon which an elderly man, his eyes glazed, was tossing. Swiftly the doctor made his examination. Then, with a sigh, he picked up his bag and left the hut. At the door he said gently to the coolie:

"Go on calling back the soul to the body. Perhaps the ghost will hear. Miracles of this sort have happened in China."

"You can do nothing?" the coolie asked humbly.

"I can do nothing," Dr. Lincoln answered.

Despairingly, yet filled with stubborn hope too, the man's voice lifted.

"*Kyuiiiii laaaay*—come back!"

And the old woman, sitting astride the roof on which the soul is thought to hover for a brief space before taking flight to the next world, shrilled in her senile voice—

"*Laaaaaaay-ga*—Come!"

GUNS *for* BUSINESS

By RAYMOND S. SPEARS

GOOD men often came to sit in the Mendova gunstore. They came down the Mississippi, or out of the West by trains, or from the highways. Others, often not nearly so good, drifted in too, and sometimes the cubby around the big stove at the rear of the salesroom held a group of peculiar people. They sat in chairs around the walls, in niches and shadows—mostly youngsters, but some of them old in their lines. Some places are like that, known to many who chance to drift into the natural trails of humans on the move.

A norther was blowing, cold, whistling, and stinging with rain. By rights, Wednesday should have been an odd night, with the southbound shantyboat migrants snugly tied to the Mendova mud bar and the auto tourists bunked tight up in the municipal park camp ground. But all had not stayed with their outfits. Judging by the rubber boots visible in the light from the gunsmith's bench, three or four river rats were leaning back in the shadows of their hats. Then there were leather laced boots, and two pairs of oxfords with mud on the fancy silk socks above them. Just like some folks to wear low shoes tripping South in late Autumn! Yet something in the indifference of even the wearers of those fancy pavement shoes to the muddy country displayed personality, just as the dangle of rubber boots and the trim laced hunting leather indicated "good ones."

Only the old gunsmith had mild eyes. He was working on a .22 caliber automatic pistol which wasn't ejecting right. It needed the spring tensions adjusted so an empty shell would flip out right and the loaded shell tip into the chamber just so. The blue was well worn off that weapon. Cold blue and chill gray eyes, beady black and staring brown eyes watched the work appreciatively. Presently the old gunsmith stepped back and poked the weapon toward a big sheet of lead splashed iron and let go a whack at it. He watched the flip of the empty .22 long rifle shell leaving the

ejector— Not quite right yet, but he was getting it, finding out what was the matter.

Going back to the bench, the gunsmith did more tinkering. The front door opened with a click, and heavy feet came tramping in. The door slammed shut. A noisy, flapping newcomer came around to the long north aisle, shaking himself and looming large as the light fell upon his thick, black, shining rubber coat. Tipped over his left ear was a wide, wet hat running water down on to his coat. A wet, reddish face came into view; and when he reached the repair cubby the man took off his hat and gave it a mighty sweep, throwing water like a sprinkler on the floor, hissing on to the stove and even on the ceiling in a line of shining drops.

"She's sure pouring an' blowing tonight!" he announced. "Woosh!"

"Oh, yes!" the gunsmith admitted amiably. "We get a sprinkle now and then."

"I jes' come down the river," the man declared. "Landed jus' now 't the wharf, hook over the stern, bowling up 't a ring. Sure hongry! Ate 'bout a bushel. Well, who 'n hell eveh uses a two-bit pistol like that—a .22? Well, doggone! A .22—he-heh—some kid, I suppose?"

"No, it's a trapline bait gun."

"Well, when I git to pack a .22 pistol I'll sure be in my second childhood," the man announced easily. "Me—I pack a real gun!"

Reaching under his left armpit, from a shoulder holster he pulled an ornate weapon with much engraving and gold and silver plating. It was the sort of weapon admirers give their favorite sheriff or police captain to carry on parades and Frontier Days and other occasions when good men are supposed to be as ornamental as they are good.

"Now ain't that the real tamer?"

No one said it wasn't. Lying on the big hand of the visitor, the weapon was a piece of jewelry, .45 caliber, seven shots and all according to the side-arms of the day. But perhaps the man who had it was the only one there who would have used the thing for business, even if it was a gift. Shining, flashing, carrying enough light of its own to be seen on a dark night in a back alley or corridor, every one seemed to appreciate the fact that it was just a dead giveaway. If one's taste ran to that kind of thing it indicated plenty.

From the weapon the eyes in the shadows surveyed the man who exhibited it. He was square shouldered, rather bony, hard faced and tense—a burly, husky man who looked as if his specific gravity was that of metal or stone rather than human flesh. He reached and held the weapon in his hand beside the well worn .22 automatic with which the gunsmith was tinkering. He laid them side by side on his two palms and studied them, tipping his head first to the left and then to the right, his lips lifting in an odd twitch.

"Heh!" He nodded his head. "A .22, eh? Doggone! That's got a good grip to it, hangs nice, sure holds steady, has the heft, all right! But that's one thing about a short gun for business—when a man needs it he sure wants plenty of punch to his slug when it lands. A bait gun, eh? Um-m—that'd be all right to kill a wildcat er coon in a trap, 'course. That muzzle's kinda small, trifling. A man with a side-arm, if he needs it, needs it to be right, you bet! 'Course, a trapper—killin' bait 'r like that, a .22 's cheap to shoot. But if a man's a real man, an' he's up agin a real proposition, he'd oughta have a real gun, not jes' a triflin' lil' pop like this'n. Huh!"

The man handed back the .22, butt first. He pulled his rubber coat and his undercoat away out, and every one there could see the shoulder holster with straps like a mule trace, all embossed and filigreed; into the gaping leather the silver and gold, engraved and rustless steel gun was thrust with a large, elaborate, accustomed movement. Then the man buttoned his inner coat, flapped his black rubber coat and fastened the button across his waist, all in a kind of grand and gracious way of having shown some people what a real gun was.

Then the visitor dragged a vacant chair from the shadows of the darkish salesroom and sat down in it. He pulled out a bag of tobacco and some papers, rolled a fat cigaret and lighted it against the red of the stove, puffing with an air of satisfaction and pride, listening as if

he expected somebody to start saying something. No one did. In fact, the gathering was watching the gunsmith with a certain unanimity of attention.

It is always a joy to watch a workman doing a good job—and the gunsmith was putting some finishing touches on that .22 pistol. When presently he let go a second shot from it, and the slug whanged against the spread of target, all noticed that the copper shell flipped with a sharpened whistle from the ejector, and the slide-block snapped back against the loaded shell with a whack that indicated near perfection—but not quite. The gunsmith wanted to take a few more pains—touch a bit here, scrape a bit there, squint in and out while working the parts.

When he fired the next shot it would have taken an expert to see the difference between the action then and the action of the previous shot. There were experts to notice, however—even if the rubber coated newcomer was looking around, up and down, as if keeping his face in motion would bring attention to it, rather than to a bit of folderol of experting.

THE .22 automatic was right for sure now; fondly the gunsmith went over it, inside and out, with oil and then with grease. He made sure of the inside of the barrel, then gave the sights a critical examination. When he had finished he picked up a long, narrow, leather holster which had the look of much usage and shoved the weapon into it. He would have laid it down on the bench, but one of the men with oxfords on his feet tipped forward on the instant and took it up to look it over.

"I wondered what kind of a man packed a gun like that!" The newcomer chuckled, and the pinched, sharp nosed, beady eyed fellow turned to glare.

"What's it to yah?" the man snarled. "Huh! The boy 't carries this 'd eat two of you!"

The black coated man just laughed and blew rings of cigaret smoke.

"He would!" the city man repeated.

"With a .22, I reckon!" the big man remarked acidly.

"Listen—don't fool yerse'f," insisted the man who was out of place in muddy country. "Get me?"

"With a .22!" his antagonist jeered.

"Let 'm talk," the other of the two with low shoes warned, and that was good advice.

Drawing out a roll of bills, he paid the cost of putting the .22 automatic in order; the two then headed for the front door, jerked it open and turned to the left—north—beating into the wind. The instant they were out of sight the newcomer swung up from his chair, went through the repair cubby to the rear and, pulling the bolt on the door there, opened it and went out into the alley, closing the door softly behind him.

The five men who remained in the repair shop, sitting quietly, except the gunsmith standing at his bench, now leaned forward with a quick glance around. Their faces were varied—two were chubby and two were hatchet-sharp. The little old gunsmith, who had a gray mustache and mild blue eyes, sometimes would make remarks which indicated profound and exclusive information. He now reached for a repeating shotgun that needed a new trigger.

"What do you make of it?" one of the four inquired.

"Tell you better tomorrow, if not before." The gunsmith grinned.

In the quiet that ensued the wind's clattering, the rain's splashing and the noise of water coming down the spout waxed and waned. A rough storm, that. Suddenly, overhead, bewildered in the city lights, they heard a flock of wild geese pounding by with their voices raised in high alarm. The men cocked their ears, listening. One of the boys stepped to the rear alley door and opened it, standing there with the fine misty splash shining around him.

Two or three times the man at the door made as if to close it and resume his chair, but each time he gave it a second thought. Presently he closed the latch and returned to sit where the newcomer had been—as if he would put himself into the man's mind, satisfying his curiosity. Men accustomed to minding their own business were now wondering, startled and puzzled. They had seen something—heard something—like a good story interrupted in the middle;

somehow they weren't at all satisfied with the way things stood.

"You said that was a *trapper's* killin' .22?" a querulous voice reminded the gunsmith, who fought an obstreperous screw a minute before he gave signs of having heard the accusation.

"You know, I was just remembering I said that," the gunsmith admitted. "I don't think I was mistaken. I'd handled that gun before."

"What were those fellows doing with it?" another remarked. "They couldn't set a trap for a house mouse!"

"I know; they just brought it in, asking to have it set to working right," the gunsmith said. "Generally I don't talk about my customers' propositions. That man with the fancy gun kinda offset me a bit. When men talk like that, you know it's provoking."

"Oh, nobody'd blame you—not a bit," two men said, reassuring him in two phrases; one added, "We understand that."

"Prob'ly it doesn't mean anything, anyhow," a chubby sportsman remarked.

"There's something up!" Another shook his head.

The gunsmith repaired the shotgun and unbuttoned his apron. Then he hesitated. Listening to the wind, he heard something in it; he rebuttoned his apron, and the four men who had swung forward into the light, tipping down their chairs, tipped back again.

SUDDENLY the front door opened and closed softly. A dark figure glided swiftly along the front, down the long counter into the light of the repair shop. It was the man in the black rubber coat, but this time he came with no swagger and with no grandiloquent gestures. He looked smaller, and huddled up, and his face was even harder looking.

He drew from his pocket a .22 automatic pistol; when he extended it on his left palm, it was wet and unmistakable—the weapon that had just been repaired.

"Old man, you said that belonged to a trapper?" the visitor asked.

"Yes—"

"What trapper?"

"That any of your business?" the gunsmith asked.

"Yes, indeed!" the man said, pulling back his coat to display a beautiful sheriff badge, obviously a gift. "My name is Joslin, Sheriff Joslin of Plum Point County."

"Well, Sheriff, I'm glad to meet you! That's a pistol I sold to Otter Joe Boyson about three years ago."

"You're sure of that?"

"Oh, yes. Same number—and I fined the sights for him," the gunsmith said. "Why—anything happened?"

"Plenty happened," the sheriff said. "Those two gangsters banged Joe on the head one night last week and tripped down in his shantyboat. If he hadn't had a thick head, and if the water hadn't revived him, he never would have showed up again. He told me about it, and said his .22 bait pistol wasn't working just right. I took a chance, and there you was working on it. Doggone, I wanted to yelp—"

"Now I suppose I gotta be a dadblasted court witness."

"No, I don't expect." The sheriff shook his head. "Nothing but a coroner's jury, far's that's concerned; my word's good, far as that goes."

"Coroner? We listened for shooting—"

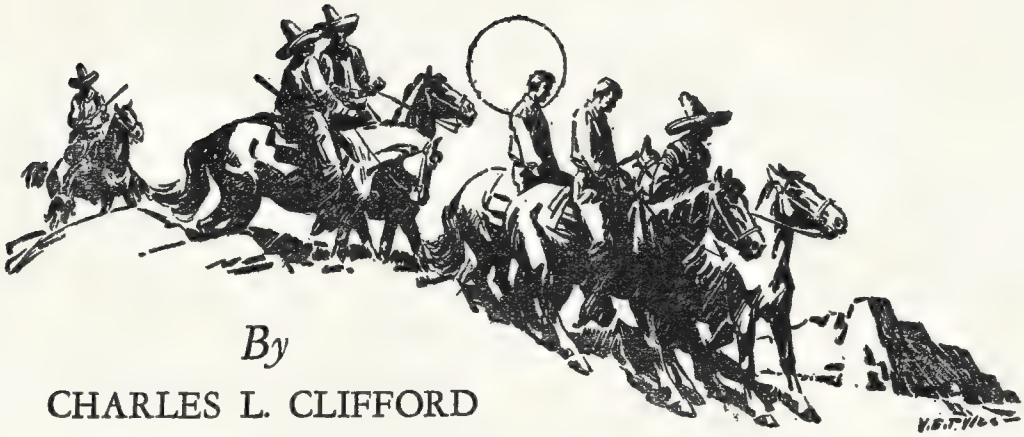
"You di-id?" The visitor chuckled wryly. "I headed 'm down to their boat—Otter Joe's boat. They made a right serious mistake."

"Yes?"

"Yes, they began to shoot, the wind in their faces." The sheriff had to laugh again, softly. "You know, I always come downwind on that kind, and the rain in their faces sure spoils their aim."

"I suppose you used that fancy gun?" the sportsman remarked.

"Oh, hell, no—not for business!" The sheriff gave his arms a shake, and two worn, blue barreled revolvers were pushed out of his big sleeves into his palms, ready. "Those fellers seen me all buttoned up. I had to laugh, and they kinda hesitated, giving me a chanct while they was telling what they was going to do before doing it—huh—to me!"



By

CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

A BLAZE *of* GLORY

PRIVATE Whitey Miller stumbled ahead of the growling guard. Two dirty electric bulbs shed a faint light through the jail. Below one was the iron door of a cell. Through this Whitey was thrust. A man was in the cell. He got up from the one bench in the place, stretched and yawned elaborately. He burst into a loud laugh, turning his mocking face to the dim light.

The man was Corporal Leo MacMahon, 1st U. S. Cavalry, whose yawning at such an hour would have been more appropriate in his squad-room at Marfa, Texas, than in this Mexican prison.

"I hope you're satisfied," Private Miller said acidly.

Corporal MacMahon renewed his hearty laughter.

"A dirty, lousy Irish trick. All you did was cut off your ugly nose to spite that pan of yours. In another hour I would have had you out. Now look at what you done—all account you think you gotta sense of humor, whatever that is!"

Whitey vainly searched for a cigaret. His erstwhile bunkie handed him one. It was coldly disdained, though Private Miller's nerves were shaking.

"You shouldn't of let me down," the corporal said virtuously. "If you'd of held that guy I could of made a getaway."

"An' me in the can here instead of you," Whitey said, glaring.

"You'd of been in here, of course," Mac said reasonably. "But instead of me gallivantin' around with spick dames an' swillin' champagne an' forgettin' a bunkie in trouble like you went an' done, I'd of bailed you out."

"Listen, wise guy," Whitey put in hotly, "you was the smart aleck what was tired of corp'ril's stripes; howlin' about how they didn't get you nothin' but a lotta extry duty, and how you been tryin' to shake them off for three hitches. You couldn't shed 'em by fair means; so you gotta do it by foul! You was the guy what has this grand idea about them slot machine slugs. An' when you went an' got pinched, you had to get me in it too. Hell, I ain't tryin' to lose nothin'. I lost my stripes, honorable, right when I wanted to. Ain't no use you pullin' that smooth line now—the cop told me you squealed. This here goin' back to the rear rank in a blaze o' glory ain't no use to me. I been back there a'ready for the last ten years!"

"Me squeal on a bunkie?" Mac echoed virtuously.

"You said we was holdup guys, didn't you?"

Mac roared with laughter.

"Go on an' laugh," Whitey muttered. "You ain't only gonna lose a pair of stripes—you're gonna get more than a lousy zebra."

"Hell, Whitey, all we done is put a few slugs in a slot machine, an' I had the tough luck to ketch the bouncer's eye. I'm conspicuous that way. A guy like you, colorless sorta, naturally wouldn't draw no attention. But that ain't no crime."

"No crime, hey? You went an' said I held up a Army paymaster, didn't you?"

Again Mac laughed heartily.

"Hell, I was oney kiddin'. I figgered they'd pick you up on suspicion. Then I'd tell them it was oney a joke. What I wanted to do was conserve that dough *my* brain thought up. I wanted you to get down here with it an' bail me out before you spent it on a lot o' them spick girls. I waited a decent interval, but when you didn't show up I knowed I'd have to use me bean again. So I tell the *jefe* here that yarn—"

Whitey shook his aching head mournfully.

"I had a funny feelin' ever since that black cat run out from under that railroad shed at Marfa when we hopped the Sunset. Mac, you know they ain't no spick in the world could see through a Irish joke."

Mac scratched his head. His face had become suddenly serious.

"One thing I will say for you, Whitey—you can smell real trouble farther ahead than any white guy I ever seen. Take that goat we borried an' shaved back at Douglas, the mayor's goat—"

"This ain't no time for memories." Whitey groaned. He thought a moment, his long face longer still in the dim light coming through the bars. "Say, you know them bags, what we had the slugs in?"

"What about them?" Mac asked idly.

"They was chock full of half dollars an' quarters by the time you was caught," Whitey said mournfully. "I changed the dough to bills at the Jockey club. The cop what pinched me in the Oasis said they'd picked them up. About them bein' evidence. Where'd you get them, Mac?"

Mac looked down at his hands. He rubbed them thoughtfully.

"Jest old coin bags I picked up at headquarters last time we was paid. You know how I always pick things up other guys wouldn't notice. I look ahead. You never can tell when a thing will come in handy. Jest old sacks, Whitey."

Whitey shook his head sadly. He said coldly and with elaborate irony—

"Jest old sacks!"

"With some printin' on them," Mac said defiantly.

In the same tone Whitey echoed:

"Some printin' on them! Government printin', money printin', that's all. They paid us in gold last time an' them sacks had amounts writ on them."

"I guess maybe they did," Mac said, less surely now.

WHITEY sank back against the damp wall of the cell. No use arguing about it all; here they were. If only Mac hadn't been so hoggish. Morosely his mind wandered back to the evanescent glory of a few hours earlier—hours that might have been prolonged indefinitely if his advice had been taken.

They had practically emptied the huge sacks of slugs they had brought from Marfa. And in place of those slugs, the canvas bags bulged with the quarters and half dollars they had won. He had pleaded with Mac to desist—no use running a good thing ragged. Then that brief, glorious hour that was spent at the quiet table in a booth of the bar. Canvasback duck, mushrooms—and that funny stuff that looked like muddy bird shot which Mac grandly ordered. Beer, a whole bottle of Sunnybrook, fifty-cent cigars; and just starting on the first bottle of champagne when Mac got that crazy idea. He had to load the last few handfuls of slugs into the machines. Said he had a hunch they were hot. Just for luck!

Well, they turned out hot, all right. But luck—Mac had hardly pulled the lever a half dozen times before the bouncer was upon him; had him red handed. It served him right. And there

went his stripes, as he'd wanted right along. "Absent in the hands of the civil authorities" the morning report would read. . .

Naturally he had pretended he didn't know Mac at the time of the pinch!

Sure, he'd have bailed Mac out the next day; and there'd still have been money left for beer, a big lunch and a ride on the observation car back to Marfa. As it was, all they had left to show for their winnings were the gay cigar bands Mac was so nuts about pocketing on occasions of grandeur and temporary affluence.

Whitey's gloomy thoughts were interrupted by the sound of footsteps outside and the rattling of a key.

A guard unlocked the door. He growled at them, motioned them out. They followed him, both rather alarmed, through a narrow door and into a small, square room with several barred windows. A naked, dusty light bulb dangled over a small wooden table. There were three chairs in the room. At the table sat a man. He wore a very white Stetson hat circled with a band of fancifully plaited horsehair. High heeled cowboy boots showed under his blue serge trousers. He had on a gay shirt of silk and a gayer tie under a conventional business suit. He motioned the guard from the room after he had carefully deposited on the bare table a villainous looking revolver. He pointed to the empty chairs.

"Sit down, *amigos*. Where's the money?"

The two soldiers sat down. They eyed the Mexican, then looked at each other. Whitey said—

"The judge out there got all our dough."

The Mexican laughed unpleasantly.

"Don't waste my time."

He tossed on the table two familiar looking canvas bags. He smoothed them out so that the bold printing in black was plainly readable. Stenciled across each bag were the terms: $5,000 GOLD.

Mac was the first to speak. He prefaced his words with a laugh meant to be light and gay.

"Jest a joke I was playin' on Whitey here," he said cheerfully.

The Mexican said nothing. But his lips drew together and his eyes half closed. His whole manner indicated that facetiousness might profitably be excluded from the present conversation. Hurriedly, Mac elaborated his jaunty opening sentence with a sketchy, expurgated account of the day's events that had landed him and his bunkie in the Juarez jail.

The Mexican cut him short with an imperative, upraised hand.

"You are in serious trouble, my friends. I am an important *politico* in Juarez as you may have heard. My name, señores—" the Mexican swelled out his huge chest, his black eyes flashing—"is Ramon Malvez. Maybe you have hear of me, no?"

Heard of him? Who hadn't? He was the killer type of professional Mexican Border bandit. Posing as a revolutionist in every reactionary movement, he used insurgent troops for his own private and always gainful ends. It was well known that Juarez with its rich gambling concessions was his goal. The present government feared and placated him because of his outlaw affiliations.

Malvez went on harshly:

"I know that the payroll is taken. Twenty thousand gold, American money. I have talked with the owner of the Jockey club. He tell me that you—" he shot a rigid finger at the white faced private—"come in there several hour ago very drunk. You laugh. You buy every one a drink in that place. You empty these bags of silver money. You get paper. You think you are safe in Mexico, eh?"

Whitey tried to move his stiff face. His voice was thin and dry as he said—

"You tryin' to kid us?"

The Mexican made a swift movement of his hand. He whipped an El Paso newspaper from an inner pocket. An evil look of triumph lighted his dark face.

"What you say to this? Maybe I write it, eh?"

The two soldiers bent over the crumpled sheet. Bold headlines met them squarely. Smaller print below danced before their eyes. Fragments of sentences:

" . . . Major Martin J. Cooley, Finance Corps, U.S.A, en route to pay troops at

Columbus, N. M. . . . accident to the car and while guards were assisting in getting it back on road two armed men covered them with pistols . . . rode away to south. Believed to be making for Chihuahua district. . . . One light, one dark . . . tall, deeply tanned. Money taken in gold twenties packed in regulation bank canvas sacks. . . . Believed to be Americans."

THERE was a dead silence for a time. Whitey's steady gaze was fixed uncompromisingly on Mac. The corporal's usually colorful face had gone a dirty gray.

"You tell him, big boy," Whitey said. "I stutter."

"Make it quick!" Malvez said. "And true."

Desperately Mac gave tongue. He explained how, earlier that day, a fatal and culminative ennui had overcome him. For years he had borne the weighty responsibility of a corporal's stripes, seeking eternally to lose them with honor, or at least in no petty manner. He envied his pal, Whitey, who had lost his definitely, permanently and irrevocably, some five years back. He wanted to be a carefree buck; but, being a man of imagination, and having a sense of the fitness of things, he wanted to lose them in a blaze of glory—

Here Whitey intervened morosely.

"I told him he could take a crack at the top sergeant or heave a horseshoe through the colonel's parlor window. That way he'd 'a' been a private almost on the spot."

Mac shot Whitey a look.

"I didn't want to be no private at Leavenworth," he said.

But the look Malvez turned on them both put an end to this local engagement. Mac went on sadly:

"When they was punchin' some artillery gun shields durin' division maneuvers, the slugs was the same size as quarters; so I went an' collected these here bags full of 'em. Then we hopped the blind of the Sunset Limited an' me an' Whitey here worked them crooked machines at the Central. The bouncer got me; an' this here so called bunkie o' mine went an' said he wasn't with me—never seen me before. So they called a cop, and here I am. This here about any holdup is the bunk. When they showed me these bags later, I said, 'Sure, we held up a guy. My pal's got the dough. Go an' bring him in.' "

Mac's indignation now spurred Whitey on. He said:

"That's straight, Chief. All you got on us is passin' a few slugs in them slot machines. An' all that amounts to is gettin' dough back from them crooked things what we put in there many's the time when we was stationed at Bliss."

The Mexican said dryly:

"You observe that this affair take place today. Even if what you say is true you have time for it. And if you are soldiers—well, then you might have the information."

The two soldiers began to talk at once, protesting their innocence. Malvez's face grew darker. He pushed back his chair violently. He jumped to his feet. He growled:

"Tonight a Mexican die in a cantina on Calle Diablo. There are witnesses to say who did this deed. Two men, they will say; one light, one dark. Two Americans who look exactly like you, my friends. You understand me? They are friends of mine, who owe me much, these witnesses."

Mac and Whitey also got up. Too late for fun now; and Mac's Irish was boiling.

"Frameup, eh? And who the hell are you? We're in a regular Mexican jail, and you can't put that stuff over. Go on, try us. They ain't any court in the world would find us guilty. Get this finance major."

The Mexican glared.

"I am *politico* here. Already I arrange for the *jefe de policia* to turn you over to me. He is one of these friends I mention just now. This murdered one tonight is also a friend of mine. So you answer to me for that crime. Outside I have men. If you are wise you tell me at once where this money is hidden. It is plain that you cache the big money and use the silver only for play."

Mac started to argue. The Mexican stopped him with an upraised hand. He called out, and almost instantly two villainous looking Mexicans were beside

him. Each held a revolver close against his hip.

"I will give you one minute," Malvez said. "After that time, if you do not care to talk, these gentlemen will lead you to the cemetery wall. You will be taken in a car, quietly. You will be gagged."

Mac and Whitey exchanged scared glances. Then Mac said—

"Leave us talk this over."

Malvez smiled. He waved the two desperadoes outside.

"That is better, my friends."

"How about it, Whitey?" Mac said in a manner so significantly melodramatic that a child would have guessed his insincerity.

But Malvez had discreetly turned his back the better to further the conference. Whitey knew that look and voice of old. He knew a scheme was working in that shrewd brain of Mac's. Badly as most of these schemes usually turned out, anything was better than the alternative fate which he was now convinced was not a bluff. He understood by Mac's ostentatious question that he was to agree to an admission of guilt in the interest of a greater freedom of movement.

His own slow-working mind had as yet no workable scheme thought out. It had been stunned into complete inertia as far as constructive ideas were concerned. Precarious as Mac's plan might be, it was bound to be fairly plausible; he'd give Mac credit for that. It might even be inspired. Malvez was too close to them for any discussion; but Whitey figured that his bunkie had thought up some subterfuge that would get them out of their present grim surroundings and within reach of a telephone.

"Spill it, kid," Whitey said after a decent interval of apparently deep thought.

"All right, General. You got us," Mac said with artful resignation. "We'll put out."

Luckily, Malvez understood. And he was exultant at this easy and prompt action. He smiled at Mac.

"You do Mexico one gran' act, señor. That gold will pay my troops, waiting, as you shall see, to make the gran' coup. I am no bandit. No! When I take this town, you get it back."

Malvez had arisen and was pacing the floor as a patriot should in such circumstances. Under cover of his patriotic ardor, Whitey was shooting violently suggestive looks at Mac, intending to egg on his versatile bunkie to imaginative but plausible action. But Mac was miles ahead of Whitey. His sullen mood had been richly productive.

"Aw, lay off! You wanta queer it?" he asked Whitey.

Then he turned a canny eye on the still muttering Malvez. He well knew that too easy a capitulation might be fatal. These Mexicans weren't so dumb as they looked. Not the *politicos*.

"You gonna be president when this here coup comes off?"

"I shall be the military governor, the commander of this garrison and the district of Juarez," Malvez said loftily.

"O. K," Mac said decisively. "We put out: show you where the gold is—"

"Yes, yes! You will find me grateful. It is for—"

"You make us both officers—him and me."

Malvez rubbed his hands together. Ah, these gringos! What fools! But they were soldiers. They would know machine guns.

"Captains, both of you! And maybe later—"

Mac's eyes blazed with righteous indignation. He almost forgot he was playing a deep game.

"The hell you say! And him oney a buck private. You make me a major."

Malvez bowed gracefully. It was getting late. What did it matter?

"You are a major," he said solemnly. "And your friend, he is *capitán*. Now we go."

Mac rose with alacrity. He shot a triumphant look at the dazed Whitey.

"Let's go, Capitán Milyair!"

THEY rode southeast, an orange moon at their backs. They could see the thin line of cottonwoods along the Rio Grande to their left. Besides the two Americans there were only Malvez and four heavily armed riders. A larger party, the Mexican *jefe* explained, might

have aroused the suspicion of the military in the town.

But now they were well out on the desert and they rode more freely. Though both Whitey and Mac, imbued with the same idea, tried to get together to exchange confidences, Malvez's eye was always upon them.

Whitey was worried. True, they were out of the frying pan, but decidedly they were in an increasingly hotter fire. Each step took them farther from civilization. With a sigh Whitey watched the dim lights of El Paso far behind them. He was disturbed by Mac's steady, unmusical whistling. Mac always whistled when a gay scheme was fomenting in his crazy bean! It meant that to Mac the scheme was already a gaudy success. But what plot of Mac's had ever really worked? Whitey rode on with a heavy heart.

Malvez, too, seemed eager and hopeful. Small wonder, though. He fondly imagined he was riding to retrieve the bags of gold which, Mac warily had admitted, they had buried near the Border earlier that day.

"I'll show you when we get there," Mac had said. "It's above Guadalupe near that little island in the river . . ."

That's all Mac would divulge. But it put Malvez in a gay humor. He had said:

"We go to that place, anyway. It is the rendezvous."

Mac had merely smiled as if that were right in line with his own desires.

"You can swear us in there," he had said. "An' remember, General, I get a major's uniform."

So here they were, moving ever closer to Malvez's revolutionaries, who were gathered in the toughest town on the Mexican Border. Whitey had heard of that sinister hamlet. An officer had once been abducted and held there for ransom. Thieves made it their hangout. To modern Mexico it was much as Tortuga was to the buccaneers in the days of the Spanish Main—a festering sore that drained its venom on both sides of the Border.

They marched for some time in silence. The shadowy forms of coyotes slunk by them. The moon assumed a deeper color. They could hear the fitful purl of the dirty river in its almost dry bed. That was one comfort, Whitey thought. It was the dry season, and the river would be no obstacle—just a dash across the shallows. And there at the island—he remembered it well, he'd done patrol once—it was a mere ditch. It was canny of Mac to have thought of that place. Once across, they would be on the Fabens road, near the railroad. They could hop a freight and be back to Marfa with luck by the next night.

They'd have a big story to tell, all right. But all they would get would be a lot of "Oh, yeah's?" Not a word of it would be believed. No cigar bands, souvenirs of their spree, would authenticate an Arabian Night's tale such as this. Mac would lose the stripes, of course, but not as he'd planned. Not in one blasting blaze of glory! And then there was Private Kenny. Whitey groaned. Every nickel of his next month's pay would have to go to appease his horror at sight of his hard earned, beautiful brown suit which Whitey had borrowed. He looked down at that suit. It was certainly an awful mess now.

They rode over a mesquite covered slope and saw the lights of Guadalupe. Malvez sent one of his men ahead at a lope to warn the officer in command—another "general."

"Comin' up! Buckets of blood!" Mac said cheerily.

"No. No blood," Malvez remonstrated. "We have our right flank on thees river. So they can not turn it unless they cross to the United States, and you soldiers will not allow—"

A ray of hope came to Whitey.

"We got soldiers over there?" he asked carelessly.

Malvez grunted.

"They always tale, somehow, whane we go to fight across here. So they sand you soldiers to watch. They fear we fire over there or maybe cross to turn a flank."

"Well, with you guys swarmin' around Guadalupe like you say, no wonder they knows when you start somethin'. But they's jest dumbells. We don't want them to see us."

"Hell no!" Whitey echoed without conviction.

They were now several miles south of

the river. As they moved slowly toward the town a gray blur moved swiftly and silently across their line of vision. It was a party of mounted men, riding north. Malvez halted his own band and stared after the shadowy patrol. He muttered as he stared.

"*Federalistas?*" Mac asked cheerfully.

"I theenk so. They watch that Guadalupe." He shrugged. "To hale weeth them! Not many. They go by the river and back home and say nothing. They ride right through Juarez and don' stop until Chihuahua. Ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha, hell, if we meet up with them," Whitey said gloomily. "We have to go right up to the river for the money."

Mac laughed cheerfully as they rode up to the town.

THE general in command met them in front of the first cantina. There seemed to be nothing but cantinas in the place, and all were lighted and rocking with sound.

"So this is the jumping off trench, the line of departure?" Mac said, gazing curiously around.

The place teemed with armed men. Several field pieces were rumbling about, the drivers cursing. Burros moved by with machine guns on their backs. Mounted troops were already forming. Quite a group of officers accompanied the field commander, and they all talked to Malvez at once. He swelled with dignity. Finally he quieted them with a majestic wave of his hand and stared haughtily at the senior.

"Now, General Rubio?"

General Rubio was a tough looking character. Seen under the ordinary circumstances of civilization and not on a horse, he might have gotten by as the heavy in a not too prosperous burlesque troupe. He roared—

"Without the pay there is no fight—except one against the other for what mescal they have not already robbed from the cantinas!"

He waved a tragedian's arm to indicate the patriots about him. They were indeed a brawling, villainous lot. Even as he spoke, knives flashed in his very face as two of his legionnaries, tired of words, went for each other. He shrugged.

"See? Two officers."

"I hope they ain't majors," Mac muttered to Whitey.

Malvez harangued them, worked on their emotions as only a Latin *politico* can do. During his wordy explanation of the sudden wealth that would be theirs in less than an hour, the wild group about the other general increased. Smiles appeared, especially when Malvez solemnly promised that the officers should be paid first in gold coin before a shot was fired at Juarez.

He carefully refrained from explicit explanation. That would have lessened his prestige. He, the great Ramon Malvez, stooping to dig what *ladrones* had stolen from gringo fools? Ah, no! The gold was to come from a mysterious source—big El Paso bankers who would send it in secret to a nearby designated place. He and a small guard would go for it. These gringos with him were the agents for those bankers.

"Did you get that, Whitey? We're bankers at last!"

Two men pushed through the crowd and looked up at Malvez. The taller said in English—

"Are you General Ramon Malvez, sir?"

Malvez swelled.

"I have that honor."

Both men began to talk simultaneously. General Rubio interrupted them. He explained that they were Americans seeking strayed cattle. That they had been picked up by his men riding to the south. And that he feared they might talk to *Federalista* patrols they met. No use taking chances with the town almost in their hands.

The men again appealed to Malvez. They were peaceful Americans. All they wanted was to be turned loose and allowed to recross the Line. They did not want to be mixed up in any revolutions. They had families. As they talked they noticed Mac and Whitey staring at them sympathetically.

"You understand, buddy. Make it clear to them."

Mac was delighted with this turn of events. Here were reenforcements, both armed, too, and mounted on likely look-

ing horses. Their silver studded saddles, each loaded behind with compact, well filled saddlebags, proclaimed them well-to-do ranchers who might be worth visiting at a later, and brighter, date. If Malvez could be persuaded to let them ride along when the break came the chances would be better. Four men making a run for it would stand a better chance than two. And these babies were armed. A word to them on the side . . .

Mac said—

"For the love of Pete, ain't you Jim Boswell has the ranch down Fabens way?"

The man caught on at once. He turned to shake Mac's hand.

"Put it there, buddy! Ain't seen you since—"

"Time we marched by your place an' watered," Mac said glibly. He turned to Malvez. "General—" he saluted as became a loyal major—"these here are cowmen from Fabens way. No use us gettin' the gringos sore, kidnapin' them. Jest cause a mess and a lot of explanation when we get into Juarez."

Malvez thought so too. He said gruffly:

"They can ride with us to the river." He bowed politely to the two American cattlemen. "Your pardon, señores, for this inconvenience. But in time of war—"

Both men grinned, relieved.

"Oh, that's O. K, General. We understand. Movin' soon?"

Malvez stiffened proudly before he condescended to answer—

"Yes."

What a cinch! Mac began to whistle more unmusically than was his wont.

"Let's get goin'," he said. "Ain't no tellin' who might of been monkeyin' around that cache."

That was enough for Malvez.

"*Adelante!*" he roared.

He clapped spurs to his pony. A roar of cheering went up from a thousand throats as the little cavalcade cantered out of the town.

Malvez waved an imperious salute to his patriots.

"You see! Already they are straining at the leash!"

THE dust settled behind them as they rode north; and the night lightened in the east as the day came toward them. They rode at a long, easy lope. It was gray morning when they sighted the ragged trees by the river. Ramon had taken a deep swig from Rubio's dirty flask before leaving Guadalupe, and his spirits were high. He had a flask of his own, too, and he passed it around. Whitey watched Mac's bright face as his turn came.

"Easy now!" he groaned.

"It's in the bag!" Mac said.

The two cowmen rode alongside, pretending eagerness for their share.

"It's a getaway," Mac said around the lifted flask. "We make a run for it at the river. We're jest playin' along with the spicks. They gonna shoot us all. They think we're payroll bandits takin' them to a cache. Get it?"

The cowmen looked startled. Their glances met, and flashed back to Mac. Malvez was singing softly in Spanish. He wasn't paying any attention to them. His riders were arguing over some debt that was to be paid in the golden future.

"Got you!" the big cowman said through the side of his mouth. "We're with you, pard."

The flask was returned to Malvez as light as it had ever been.

A 'dobe hut was in front of them near the river bank. Malvez rode close to Mac, his gleaming little eyes avidly questioning.

"Soon, now, eh? No funny business!"

"Aw, quit it!" Mac said reassuringly. "See that shack? Well, it's buried under that. I'll show you in a minute. More gold than there is in the world. Listen, General, I get a cut, don't I? I and my bunkie took all the risk. I gotta have dough to get fixed up in a swell major's uniform when we get back to the El Dorado."

Whitey glowered at Mac. Damned poor taste. Here they were on the brink of eternity probably, and that clown kidding—kidding on one drink of tequila.

"You and your friend divide one thousan' dollair," Malvez said virtuously. "Than I pay thees all back to the American Army. I just borrow it. An' later

I pay you both moch more wane we take Juarez."

"O. K. by me, General," Mac said. "I trust you."

"Like a rattler!" Whitey said to himself.

Across the river the hills were now cleanly cut against the morning sky. Two diminutive figures moved against the gray-green background of the heavens. Mounted men.

"They's an outpost over there!" Whitey thought.

He thought it almost in the form of a hopeful prayer. If American troopers were indeed in sight when they made their break, Ramon's men would not dare fire into them; and trust them to be right at the river looking at the fun. Pursuit by the Mexicans across the Line would be out of the question. All they would have to risk would be the initial dash on the Mexican side, and perhaps most of the way across the almost dry river bed. Say a matter of some hundred and fifty yards. And if they had luck, horses close at hand, and Malvez's men were taken by surprise, they should get over fifty of those yards before a shot was fired.

In his excitement Malvez had pushed ahead a bit. He called to Mac and Whitey to ride by his side. They rode up, one on his right, the other on his left. Their faces were bland; their hearts were racing. Malvez pointed to the hut, which was some two hundred yards away. His little eyes gleamed with avarice.

"Which side, *amigos?*"

Mac was sizing up the ground, his brain racing with ideas. He remembered this hut well and the terrain about it. The lieutenant of the outpost had had to make a sketch of the ground from their side of the river and Mac had helped him. The hut lay some fifty yards from the near river bank. Their approach was shielded from the flanks by low, mesquite covered hummocks.

The trick would be to get Malvez and Whitey and himself on the far side of the hut in the interest of secrecy; to make Malvez leave the escort on this side, a march outpost as it were, while they were digging. So far, so good. They'd go mounted and, at his signal, he and Whitey would ride hell for leather. Only Malvez would be in their immediate neighborhood, and he was armed only with a revolver. The other Mexicans would be out of sight behind the house. By the time they heard Malvez's shots and got around with their rifles to a position from which they could fire after the fugitives he and Whitey would be on their way.

Now these scared cattlemen? Mac had thought that out, too. Since he had heard of the American troopers on the other side it occurred to him that it would be better to have the Texans ride over first. Get the dope to the officer in charge. Have him standing by. Malvez would think twice before he fired toward American soldiers on duty on their own side of the Line. If he hit one of them his coming inauguration in Juarez would be a cheerless affair.

Mac reined in his horse. Malvez pulled up, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Listen, General, I was jest thinkin'—" he gestured toward where the two cattlemen rode a few paces in the rear—"we don't want them gringos knowin' about this gold. They'll jest go over there and spill the beans. You might not be able to pay it all back right away, and you know how dumb the American Army is. Why, some of them officers over there might think you was a crook."

Malvez winced at this harsh word. He looked back over his escort, and his eyes came to rest on the two American civilians. He would have liked nothing better than to send bullets crashing into both of them—also into these two gringos riding so insolently beside him. But later, ah—

"I think you have the idea," he said judicially. "I have thought myself that would be best." He lifted his hand toward the two staring Texans. "Señores—"

As if the word were a signal, a volley of rifle shots rang out on the still morning air. One of the ranchmen reeled in his saddle. His hand went to his chest. He coughed harshly. Mac felt his horse shudder under him as if about to shake himself. A soldier of the escort slid soundlessly from his saddle. His horse reared and snorted and tore away to-

ward the river. Malvez let out a wild Mexican oath.

"*Federalistas!*" he yelled.

Mac dragged himself clear of his sinking mount.

"They're in the mesquite! Make for the house, Whitey!"

And that indeed seemed their only chance to escape annihilation, for the vicious crack of rifles sounded from both sides of them. Whitey dragged Mac up across his pommel. Already Malvez was racing, followed by his remaining men, for the cover of the 'dobe house. The place was a ruin—roof gone, the doorless front gaping wide where the walls had partly fallen in. A similar opening on the American side framed a peaceful picture of Texas hills.

"Get another horse," Whitey yelled above the noise. "In the shack, there. Then we'll make a break for the river!"

"O. K!" Mac grunted. His usual garrulity was limited by a huge and very hard saddlehorn sunk deep into his breakfastless stomach.

THEY made the shelter of the 'dobe walls at last, miraculously unhit. Malvez, three of his men and the two Texans were already crowded into the narrow space. The wounded American had slid from his horse and was lying, apparently unconscious, in one corner. His companion, on foot, was dragging his Winchester rifle from the scabbard hung on his saddle.

Malvez was cursing his men. He screamed at them to dismount and return the attackers' fire. Mac dropped from Whitey's horse and went over to the mount of the wounded American. He removed the rifle from the saddle. He shrugged toward the wounded man.

"Get one of his revolvers, Whitey."

Whitey did as he was bid.

"We oughta do somethin' for the poor fellow," he said, looking down at the man's colorless face.

Malvez's men were firing valiantly now. The walls shook with the reports. Mac moved close to Whitey.

"Keep an eye out at the river. We'll drive these Federals outa range; and then when I give you the word—"

"O. K," Whitey said quietly. "I can see some of our guys gallopin' over there now."

"Wait till the whole troop gets mounted. They was probably jest at chow."

Mac said this last with a wistful glance over his shoulder toward those peaceful Texas hills; so near and yet so far away.

Then they both pried away crumbling 'dobe bricks and started firing toward the south.

The nearest cover was some hundred yards away, and the attackers were obviously chary of moving out into the open against a well armed enemy behind 'dobe walls. Get a Mexican behind such a barrier and he will stand up against the best troops in the world.

Malvez, dripping sweat, called out encouragingly. He pointed out that they were merely fighting off a stray patrol; that his own troops, a few miles to the south, would hear the sound of firing. He too had patrols. He said it would be only a matter of minutes before they were relieved by reenforcing troops. And indeed, this idea seemed to have come to the enemy. Already their fire was slackening. The few attempts they had made to advance had been repulsed. And it was now plainly evident that their numbers were few.

Mac began to glance back over his shoulder more often. He could see a high, thin cloud of dust from the road on the American side. Under the pretense of searching for more ammunition, he moved back from his loophole. Then he stared boldly out of the rear door. The Americans were gathering. A strange thrill went through him as he saw the small, drab column moving at a gallop toward the high ground that overlooked the river. He nudged Whitey. Now was the time. Malvez and his men were still alertly watching for a possible rush; the attackers had moved back from their flank. If they made a dash now the only fire they need fear was from the shack itself—or so it appeared.

Whitey, who had only a revolver, felt that he could leave his position naturally.

"I'm gonna watch out to the rear there," he told Malvez. "One of them

might sneak up behind us."

Malvez smiled his agreement.

"If they had the brains of a steer it is what they would do."

There was still some firing from the shack. Under cover of the reports, Mac and Whitey had a few guarded words. They edged toward the unwounded American.

"Get your pal," Mac said. "We'll cover you. Ride like hell!"

The man's face was set in an ugly grimace.

"To hell with that!" he said thickly.

Mac and Whitey exchanged glances.

"The poor devil. He isn't used to this sort of stuff. Probably a little nuts."

They argued with him. He said viciously:

"Go on; beat it if you haven't the guts to stick. I'm stayin' with my pard."

Undoubtedly the man was insane with fear. Mac gave Whitey a knowing look and said—

"Do your stuff, Whitey."

Mac already had the reins of the wounded cowman's horse in his hand. He laid his rifle against the wall. He took one last, quick look toward Malvez and his soldiers. They were again firing briskly at the enemy in their front.

"Let's go!" Mac said.

Whitey stuck his pistol into the cowman's ribs.

"Get on your horse, pal," he said.

The man looked into Whitey's face. There was no blandness there now. They were in a tough spot: A second's unnecessary delay right now might ruin everything.

"If you open your mouth I'll shoot," Whitey said.

The man mounted. Then Whitey mounted, still keeping him covered. Already Mac had the wounded man across the pommel of his own saddle and was walking the horse toward the rear door of the shack. It was a tense moment. Four Mexican backs toward them; but at any moment a cessation of rifle fire, or just the sense of unusual movement, might cause them to hear or suspect something untoward.

Damn these dumb cowmen! Mac had thought they'd be a help, but they turned out to be nothing but so much excess baggage! He and Whitey ought to leave them. But if they rode heroically back with these two under fire there wouldn't be so much razzing on the other side. Serious as the situation was, Mac actually found time to consider that razzing. What a laugh those damned El Paso soldiers would have!

MAC stood aside and let Whitey, preceded by the tense faced cowman, ride by him through the door. He had thought up this mess, and, by golly, he was going to be the last man off the ship. They might have made it unobserved; but the glowering Texan tried one last appeal on Mac.

"Listen, buddy—"

Malvez turned.

Mac held up a reassuring hand.

"Go on, Whitey," he said out of the side of his mouth. He grinned at Malvez. "Them guys is stealin' up on our rear. We're gonna take a look—see?"

But Malvez had swung about and was dragging his revolver from his belt. Mac saw that it was too late for subterfuge.

"Whoopee!" he yelled. "Down the rathole, Whitey!"

There was a rattle of hoofs on the rock strewn ground. An insulting cloud of dust blinded Malvez. His revolver exploded viciously into the dust. But the three riders were away, racing like mad for the river; and from far on the opposite bank they could hear the wild yells of the troopers.

Whitey had a hard time staying alongside his captive. The man tried to veer his horse to the right with the obvious intention of making off along the south bank of the river. Whitey reached over, leaning well off his flying horse, and stuck the revolver barrel into his back.

"Try that again and you get it. It's my life or yours now, big boy!"

The man cursed him. But he swung his horse's head back toward the river. Bullets began to whip up the sandy ground about them. They were aware of yells and the movement of horses on both sides of them.

"They was layin' out back here!" Mac screamed. "They got Malvez all right. Spread out more— They's tryin' to cut us off!"

The wily *Federalistas* were in greater

force than poor Malvez had thought. While holding Malvez's attention in front with the fire of a few scattered skirmishers, the bulk of the *Federalistas* had worked around the flanks toward his rear. They had been just on the point of making their converging rush when the Americans leaped out in their surprise retreat.

It looked bad. Whitey swung his weapon to the front and fired almost pointblank into the face of a Mexican rider who had raced across his line of movement with the evident intention of intercepting him before he reached the sanctuary of the opposite bank. Mac dragged the revolver from the wounded man's second holster. He, too, fired to the right and left, and he was the best mounted pistol shot in the troop.

The unwounded American had at last seen the light. That savage swarm closing in on him had more effect on his sanity than Whitey's gun. He lay well over his horse's neck and rode hell-for-leather for the American side of the river. A bullet smashed his shoulder. He gritted his teeth and kicked his horse the harder.

"Atta boy!" Whitey yelled at him. "Stay with it!"

They reached the low bank. Mac had lost ground because of the extra burden of the wounded man on the saddle before him. He felt a sharp twinge under his left arm. A bullet struck the saddle behind him; he thought at first it had torn the saddle loose from the horse. Well, it wouldn't be long now . . . No, he'd never make it. He could see Whitey well down in the dry bed of the river, too low for most of the Mexican fire from the rifles behind, and too far away for the pistol shots of the Mexican riders; for they, too, had seen that American troop over there. They were taking no chances on riding into gringo territory after one lone fugitive.

The Texan was also well into the river bed.

Then Whitey's horse was down, but Whitey was safe. Hello! There went the cowman down. Pitched right off his horse. But they saw it over there. Yes, two olive drab figures were off their horses, splashing out into the shallow water. They had him now. He was half across and so it was all right. American territory. He could hear the dull sound of his horse's feet under him slowly losing speed. He looked down at the inert body across the saddle in front of him. If he didn't have this damned weight—Maybe the man was dead already. No use dragging a stiff. He shook the man and there was a faint tremor under his hand. Damn him, why hadn't he let his damned cattle stray?

The entire Mexican fire seemed directed at Mac. He kept his eyes fixed on the troop. His last sight it would probably be—the best in the world. He thought wistfully how easy it would be for the captain, who had had his breakfast, to say:

"Fight on foot! Action right!"

Ah, that would stop this moan and snap of bullets about his head in a few split seconds.

His borrowed horse lurched stolidly on, blissfully unaware of the hot death which whistled through the air like a swarm of flies. The animal was doing its best with a heavy load and could not be hurried.

THE horse shuddered, lurched almost to a stop, then gamely struggled on as Mac spurred fiercely with the heels of the yellow shoes which he had borrowed from Corporal Conway. Not a chance now. The horse was barely moving. Mac swung about in the saddle. A wild Irish mood was on him, compounded of the recent whirlwind of events and the lion's share of Malvez's tequila on his decidedly empty stomach. He was dully aware that the Mexican fire had slackened. He knew the sinister reason. Rifle bullets that missed him would now strike too close to the troop. Two champion Mexicans on picked horses were racing toward him with their pistols ready. It was not the Mexicans' way to quit their quarry in the face of laughing gringo soldiers.

Corporal MacMahon was, in the last and most important analysis, a man of great pride. And upon occasion he could summon the most lordly dignity and resolution. An occasion of the sort had undoubtedly caught up with him now. A hundred troopers, of a regiment

vastly inferior to his own, watched his smallest movement a bare hundred yards away. They could see the very changes of expression on his face. His words in this final act would be repeated through the squad-rooms of the Army. And as this glorious thought swept through his brain he decided that his last words were going to be good. He would die like a man with a wisecrack on his lips.

He allowed the stumbling horse to take its own course and pace. The grateful animal came almost immediately to a dead stop not ten yards from the river bank. From the corner of his eye Mac could see the two charging Mexicans coming swiftly toward him. They would have got him anyway if he had concerned himself with the mere goading of his horse . . .

He shifted the inert burden on his pommel so as to allow himself greater freedom of movement. He raised his revolver high, as a man does before his first important shot for record on the pistol range. A wide grin overspread his broad face, and he hoped those watching troopers saw him wink. Then he shouted gaily—

"Watch how we do it in the old First!"

Then with dramatic precision he turned and stood in his stirrups at exactly the right moment to meet the leading Mexican at the prescribed distance of ten yards. He leaned well over his horse's croup—the perfect form of the trooper firing to the right rear as illustrated in the Manual of the Pistol, Mounted. He pushed his right arm out until the revolver was straight and in perfect prolongation.

The astounded Mexicans came on, the charging pony of the first one almost unmanageable because of its extreme speed.

Bang!

"Five!" yelled Corporal MacMahon above the echo of the shot.

A wild cheer went up from the troop.

The Mexican, like a worn out doll in his great stock saddle, went lax. His pony came on. The Mexican lurched sidewise, then slid off and rolled over on the hard ground. The other Mexican tried wildly to halt his horse. The pistol in his hand was forgotten as he pulled on the reins.

But on he came, in spite of himself, into that fatal circle—that circle of ten yards' radius within which men of Corporal MacMahon's talent seldom miss.

Bang!

The Mexican, struck cleanly in the forehead, jounced from his mount without grace.

"Mark!" said Corporal MacMahon, coldly and clearly.

And then, with great dignity, he rode from his pistol course into the presence of the waiting troop.

THE young captain of the troop was very military. He commandeered a battered flivver that passed at the moment and sent the two wounded cowmen to the Post Hospital. He looked coldly at the reception his men were tendering the other two ragged civilians.

"You two men—I want to talk with you."

Mac and Whitey eyed each other significantly.

"Here goes them damned stripes," Whitey said soothingly in an aside.

They both saluted.

"Soldiers, eh? I thought so!"

The young captain had thought no such thing. His real impulse was to slap them both on the back. But his eagle eyed top sergeant was in on the conference. So there had to be dignity and discipline.

"Let's have it."

Mac told a cautious tale. The captain received it coldly.

"Deserters, eh? Well, we got word from Marfa to be on the lookout for you. And one of you a corporal!"

The first sergeant of the inferior troop said feelingly:

"One or two of our men pulled out too, Captain. These here spick revolutioners are offering cash for machine gunners."

The captain smiled grimly. He waved a hand toward the opposite side of the river.

"That's what they're going to get," he said.

And from where they stood, they could see a swarm of Mexicans seething about the crumbling 'dobe shack.

"They got your boy friends," the captain said unfeelingly. "And they've got

the whole garrison of Juarez massed by the river. They'll have Guadalupe in an hour." He turned to the top sergeant. "Have Sergeant Sweeney take these two soldiers-of-fortune into the post. Put 'em in the guardhouse. Take those cannons away from them."

"Ain't nothin' in them, sir," Mac said.

The officer tried to suppress a grin.

"When you do your time behind a sentry and your enlistment is up, come around. I'll enlist you in a troop you won't want to run away from."

Mac, whose dignity was always with him in the presence of officers, took this insult as one must.

"We oney left the best troop in the Army, sir, for a little vacation."

"Get them going, Sergeant!"

Whitey mounted the wounded Texan's horse. It was a long ride back across the dusty hills to Fort Bliss. Their horses were tired, and the noncom in charge was unsympathetic. Obviously he believed not a word they told him of their adventures.

"Tell that to a special court, big boy! You better come clean an' say you got thirsty an' Guadalupe was the nearest cantina."

IT WAS almost noon when they rode wearily across the barren drill grounds. As they were approaching the line of stables an officer rode up. By his insignia they knew him to be a veterinarian. He halted them, looking with extreme disapproval from Mac to Whitey.

"What's this?"

The sergeant explained briefly.

"Well, they can't come into the post with those two mangy animals," he said, looking at the Texan's bedraggled ponies. "We can't take any chances on glanders."

Mac looked sadly across the quarter mile of burning plain between them and the nearest barracks. The guardhouse was still some distance from there, too, he remembered gloomily.

The vet spied some old jumps nearby.

"Tie them up there. I'll have a man shoot them."

The two harassed wanderers dismounted under the eye of the sergeant.

"Shake it up, you guys!"

His glance roved over the ornate stock saddles on the two ponies. Behind each was a pair of capacious and fairly new saddlebags. Things like that had a value in this country.

"Tote them saddles on your backs, buddies. We can use them at the troop."

This was adding insult to injury. Whitey started a growl. But Mac grinned. He had an idea. There were barren, payless months ahead; but these saddles were new—twenty bucks they were worth, if a cent. He gave Whitey that knowing look so well understood between them. He said to the sergeant:

"Says you, you mail-order noncom! Them's ours an' we'll bellyache to the general before you walk 'em to a hock shop."

"Get goin'," the sergeant said rudely.

Some time later, aching in every joint, sweating at every pore, they trudged into the post. Troops were back from drill and, in the immemorial way of soldiers, they yelled and hooted at the two unfortunates. You can spot an apprehended deserter at least a mile away.

They came to the cement walk that led past the impressive headquarters building. All that long line of barracks they must travel with the rabble hooting. It was positive torture. Nothing to eat since that gay moment when they had sat in lordly grandeur in the El Central. Oh, for just one stein of that unappreciated beer that they had so prodigally wasted across the river.

They plodded on, Whitey grumbling at every step, twisting his dusty, sweaty face out from under the great, enveloping saddle like some tortured gnome doomed forever to plod under the weight of a legendary load.

"This thing feels like a coal truck."

"It's the silver on it; you'll be glad later."

"I won't never be glad again," Whitey groaned, looking out from cavernous depths.

"Halt!" the sergeant said. "Lay down them things."

They did it gladly and blinked up into the blazing sun.

A man on a great, shining chestnut horse towered over them. His face was fierce and red; his small gray mustache

bristled. They were on the walk in front of the headquarters building. The officer with the glowering face was in the road, just off the walk. They were aware of a sudden hush. Heads still hung from the windows of the barracks, but not a sound came from them.

They stood side by side, their stiffening fingers seeking the seams of their incongruous, baggy finery. Bare-headed, ragged and sweat soaked, they stood alone facing the greatest man their experience encompassed. The very worst had happened. Bad enough the guardhouse with its musty cells and kidding guards; bad enough that humiliating train trip back to Marfa with a belted guard beside them for all to see; and bad enough that first greeting with their troop commander and the subsequent humble appearance before the special—but this horror!

It was a general, and at his quick question the sergeant, who was also startled, stumbled through his version of the matter. But no general had ever stood face to face with him before—certainly not the Cavalry division commander. The sergeant made a bungled and sorry job of his tale.

The general, aware of the undignified tableau of which he made the central figure, stopped the sergeant harshly in mid-flight.

"Take them up to my office!" he snapped.

The general turned his horse over to his orderly and stamped up the steps of the headquarters building. The sergeant found his voice again.

"What about these here, General?" He pointed to the huge stock saddles lying by the lower step.

The general glared.

"Leave 'em there and get goin'," the sergeant said to the two vagrants.

They went up the dark stairs to the second floor. Clerks peered from half opened doors. The place brooded with an unnatural silence. Mac whispered as he walked on tiptoe beside Whitey:

"This ain't gonna be no lousy special. We're on the skids for Leavenworth, what I mean!"

"You wanted to lose those stripes in a blaze of glory," Whitey said sadly. "But what do I get outa it?"

"Pipe down!" the sergeant growled, bold now that the general was beyond the turn of the stairs.

THE general confronted them across a formidable desk. The bright sunlight made a patch of white on the floor where they stood at rigid attention facing him. The sergeant stood respectfully to one side. The dim, happy murmur of nearby barracks came to them. Then in the sinister silence they heard the clanging of dinner irons and the louder murmur of happy and hungry—and honest—soldiers.

Mac almost sighed aloud. Whitey gritted his teeth.

"I got your captain's report by phone," the general said to the sergeant. "But it was brief. Tell me just what you saw."

The sergeant, with many haws and hums, told him. The general sat like a sphinx, not saying a word. Mac, only half listening, was thinking fast. They were in a tough spot; there was room for constructive thinking . . .

The sergeant finished his tale. The general rapped on the desk with the stiffened fingers of his right hand—like a passionately annoyed piano player. Yes, it was going to be tough.

The silence that followed the sergeant's story was bad. Told in bald, military language, things looked worse than ever. Besides being deserters, there was conclusive evidence that they had formed part of an armed insurgent force. That they had engaged in combat against the recognized Mexican government troops. That they had fled to the American side of the Line only as a last resort.

That was the cold evidence which could be sworn to by a hundred men. Whatever story they told in extenuation would still leave the main premise unchanged: They had gone into Mexico deliberately and without sanction of constituted authority.

The general cleared his throat. His piercing eyes fixed themselves on Mac's. Without moving his head, he passed that same look on to the dumbly staring Whitey.

Two words came out of the general's

mouth, two cold words of a well known formula—

"You men—"

The phone on the desk rang sharply. The general frowned at it. He cleared his throat. The phone railed on. He snatched at it. Some quartermaster officer asking about wood purchases. Well, it was going to be tough for him, too.

The listening soldiers could hear a thin, piping sound from the instrument. The general clutched the black cylinder of the thing harder as he listened. A strange light came into his hard blue eyes. His thin lips opened, and he shot quick words back at the unseen speaker. Then he sat back in his chair and slowly replaced the receiver.

He lifted his eyes; they were bright and wondering. They moved impartially from one to the other of the delinquents. He emitted a slow, evenly spaced, hyphenated oath. Then, as if overtaken by a sudden fright, he snapped his head about and turned startled eyes on the sergeant.

"Quick, get those saddles up here!"

The sergeant went out of the room as if shot from a gun. By the time the general had moved up and out of his chair the sergeant was back and had cast the heavy saddles on the floor beside the desk. The general leaped toward the saddles, tore back the thonged flaps of the saddlebags and dragged out on to the floor two heavy, clinking canvas bags. The three soldiers watched him with popping eyes. They all began to talk at once, all rank forgotten.

"They phoned just now from the hospital. One of the bandits never recovered consciousness. The other confessed. Said how you two captured him and brought him back—spoke up just as he was dying."

Whitey started to speak. Mac kicked him hard. He returned the general more in the way of a handshake than Whitey's limp hand could contrive.

The general stood back and surveyed them as if they were attractive museum pieces.

"A great weight off my mind." He beamed at Mac. "Let's see, you say you are a corporal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, by the time I phone your colonel you'll be a sergeant. And you—" he grinned at Whitey—"you'll get stripes for this. And I'm going to recommend you both for this new Soldier's Medal. And now, Sergeant, take these two heroes over to your troop and fix them up. I'm sending them back to Marfa in my official car."

There was a stunned silence. Mac and Whitey looked at each other. The general was lighting a huge cigar and moving the box toward Mac. Whitey's bulging eyes still stared at those golden sacks on the floor.

"What I don't see is why you two didn't explain everything before!"

Mac reached for a cigar. Tenderly he slipped the wide, red band from it, which he carefully tucked into the breast pocket of Corporal Conway's suit. He would never have an audience like this again and he wanted to make the most of it. He accepted a light from the general and thanked him ceremoniously. He passed a cigar to the stupidly staring Whitey. He smiled at the general and blew out an immense cloud of blue smoke.

"We wanted to make it end up in a blaze of glory, General," he said modestly.

Continuing

C.I.D.

by

TALBOT MUNDY

The Story Thus Far:

CHULLUNDER GHOSE, the fat and nimble-witted babu whose cleverness was famous in the British intelligence service in India, was drafted by the Criminal Investigation Department and sent to the state of Kutchdullub, where trouble between the priests and the rajah threatened to break into civil war.

From its den in a ruined jungle temple a man-eating tiger was preying on the people. By right of precedent only the rajah was privileged to destroy tigers molesting his subjects. But the rajah, who had squandered his fortune in dissipation, had been branded unclean by the priests because he refused to make them rich gifts; and so he feared to defy the church by committing the sacrilege of entering holy ground. The priests, hoping to inflame the people to the point where they would demand the rajah's cousin on the throne, spread the story that the tiger had been sent as a punishment to the wicked prince, and was controlled by a holy woman called Soonya.

Major Smith, the British Resident, disliked Chullunder Ghose intensely. When he heard that the babu was on the scene, he hurried into action, hoping to settle the problem so that he might win a decoration—and show up Chullunder Ghose into the bargain. He sent for Hawkes, an ex-soldier employed in the household of the rajah, and ordered him into the jungle to shoot the tigers. Hawkes repeated his instructions to Chullunder Ghose, who countermanded them to the extent that the ex-soldier should go to the temple, but that he should not shoot the tiger. The babu realized that the people would rise in revolt if they learned that an Englishman had destroyed a tiger considered sacred to the priests and the rajah. Hawkes followed his instructions and made his way to the ruined temple on elephant-back. All about there was the rank smell of tiger; but what held Hawkes in a vise of inaction was the sight of a weird old woman standing in the crumbling doorway. It was Soonya.

In the meantime Chullunder Ghose, knowing that Major Smith was apt to ruin everything at any moment by his stupid strategy, had called on Stanley Copeland, an American doctor. Copeland greatly desired to shoot a tiger before returning to the States, but had been prevented by Smith's refusal to grant him a permit. So Chullunder Ghose invited the doctor to call with him on the Resident, whom he knew to be suffering from boils.

Major Smith was delighted when Dr. Copeland began to treat his boils; but his relief quickly changed to horror when, at a sign from the babu, Copeland desisted in his humane work.

"Would you not like to see the tiger destroyed?" Chullunder Ghose asked significantly.

"Would you not like to be decorated by the government for settling this problem? If you grant Dr. Copeland a permit to shoot a tiger, perhaps he would treat your boils. But maybe your boils aren't painful?"

"DAMN IT, yes!" Smith answered, grateful for the opportunity to answer yes.

Dignity did not permit him, in the presence of a damned American, to traffic for a ribbon. Humor beamed forth from the babu's mild eyes. He understood perfectly.

"What do you propose to do?" Smith asked him.

"Ah! If I myself knew I might argue with myself, and that is fatal. And if you knew, you might try to educate me, which is much worse."

"But you dare to try to educate me!"

"God forbid it! I propose that you should give this eye-enthusiast a cagey sort of letter which his Yankee optimism can interpret into an authority from you to shoot a tiger in the rajah's territory."

"I can't do it."

"He can make boils painless," said the babu.

With an angry gesture Smith repudiated the suggestion that his personal discomfort influenced him in any way whatever. But the movement almost made him yell with agony. He had to wait a minute before he could speak. He devoted the minute to furious thought.

"If you should tell me on your honor," he said then, "that you require this for the doctor for the purposes of C.I.D, I could stretch a point then. But I would require such an assurance from you."

"Sahib, I assure you on my honor that I need it."

"And your honor rooted in dishonor stands!" Smith answered. He never could resist an obvious retort; any more than he understood why friendships had been few and far between. "It's a very risky thing to do. I know nothing of Dr. Copeland. I might perhaps give him a note to his Highness asking for permission for him to shoot one tiger. There would be no obligation to present the letter. He might possibly interpret it as—ah—"

"He will do so," said the babu. "Will your Honor kindly write it?"

Major Eustace Smith, as desperately nervous as a schoolboy cheating at examinations, almost tiptoed to his desk. He wrote on Residency paper, with a quill pen, as illegibly as self-respect would let him, blotted it—which made it more illegible—enclosed it in an envelop, then crossed the room and handed it to Copeland. He spoke sternly.

"I want it clearly understood between us that I haven't given you permission to go tiger shooting. I have merely asked his Highness whether he would care to give you that permission."

"It's as good as Greek to me," said Copeland. "I'm taking my cue from Chullunder Ghose. A rajah and a circus amount to about the same thing in my—"

"In your ignorance!" Smith snapped back. "Now, will you be good enough to earn your fee, sir?"

Stanley Copeland went to work on him with tenderly skilful hands, a local anesthetic and a lancet that had learned to stab as accurately as a sculptor's chisel. If he lacked a bedside manner he redeemed that by precision and the confidence that he had bought with hard work. The relief on Smith's face, when the job was over and the patient lying on the couch, was almost comical; his character, the habitual mask relaxed, leered upward, loose lipped, selfish.

"Yours is an easy way to earn a living, isn't it?" he volunteered. "In New York I suppose you'd charge a hundred dollars a boil for play that's as easy to you as cutting toenails."

"No; in New York I would send you to a Christian Scientist," said Copeland, "for a dose of divine intelligence. Take these in water—once every two hours, twice; then every four hours. Have you some one who can change the dressing once a day? Very well, I'll look in on you on my way back to the border. If anything goes wrong meanwhile, just cross the border to the Sikh dispensary —Kater Singh, his name is."

"And we thank you," said the babu. "Have we now your Honor's leave to give ourselves an absence treatment?"

"Certainly, yes. Go to hell," said Smith. "You make me want to get my gun and—"

"Goodby," said the babu.

CHAPTER XIII

"The devils got Hawkesy!"

A SPIRIT of mischief—nothing else whatever — actuated Copeland. He was coming up for air. For months on end—particularly for the last ten days—he had been seeing humanity stripped, in the raw, with its weaknesses upward. He was tired out, and Chullunder Ghose had dawned on him like the rising sun at the end of a long dark night.

The tire was still flat; nobody had dreamed of fixing it. Another tire went presently. The babu drove serenely on the rims; he seemed unconscious of the jolting. Also, he seemed to believe that the horn was part of the propelling mechanism; from the Residency gate until they reached the city he almost never stopped using it.

There was an elephant in mid-street; it was half a mile ahead when they saw it first; it was still in mid-street when they caught up; it remained there; and the more the babu honked, the less inclined it seemed to get out of the way. The street grew narrower, and the crowds were out because the rain had let up for a few hours; they were sullen, touchy from close confinement indoors, and averse to making room for any one. The elephant grew more and more afraid of the infernal noise behind him; the mahout, fearful of what might happen, concentrated on his mount and never once glanced backward; but the babu kept on honking.

"For a C.I.D. man I should say you advertise," said Copeland. "What's your hurry?"

"That is the rajah's elephant. Observe the mud on him. And there is Hawkesy's luggage in the howdah, but no Hawkesy. I must talk with the mahout."

"You'll need a radio. Jee-rusalem, this is a crazy city! What's the show ahead of us? A circus?"

It was Kali's priesthood, reawakening the public consciousness of death by holding a procession through the streets. They had the image of the goddess Kali on a huge float drawn by twelve white oxen. Conch-horns blared amid a jamboree of cymbals, drums of lizard skin and jangling brass bells. Drawn toward it down a dozen streets, like water toward a central drain, the multitude roared, surged, sweated—beat its breasts and grew delirious with frenzy.

Those in front of the procession lay to let the sacred oxen trample them, and had to be prodded away by the priests' sharp sticks—a substituted pain, symbolical of the invited death and less embarrassing to the temporal power that prefers to gather taxes from the living rather than support the orphans of the dead.

A Ford horn honking at his rump, and all that din ahead of him, the elephant chose hysteria as the only consolation left. He screamed. He raised his ears. He did a trample-dance in time to the incessant drumming of the ankus on his aching skull. And then he charged into the crowd like three insulted tons of dark gray death endeavoring to slay them all at once.

"Oh, hell! I go to work again," said Copeland.

But Chullunder Ghose had eyes for nothing but the howdah.

The disturbance had awakened some one. Out from under a tarpaulin crawled some one who had his head through a hole in a blanket and a decorated sheath knife hanging at his loins. He was the sly-eyed villager whom Chullunder Ghose had sent with Hawkesy. He flung himself over the elephant's rump—whirl of naked legs and lurid tartan. But he caught its tail. He streamed out like a flying devil cast forth from a monster's flaming entrails. Then he let go suddenly, fell feet first, tumbled backward, did a perfect somersault and landed on the radiator of the Ford.

"So that's that," said the babu. "Where is Hawkesy? Damn you, where is Hawkesy? There is nothing else I want to know, so shut up and say where he is!"

Then he remembered he was talking English. He repeated the question, using the vernacular, bringing the car to a standstill by the narrow sidewalk.

"Where did you leave Hawkesy?"

Copeland got out, carrying his handbag. He could see the elephant embattled with the goddess Kali; he was

tusking at her float and overturning it, while mortally indignant priests engaged him with their sharp sticks and the sacred oxen milled in only half awakened panic. Heroism had the priesthood by the shoulders that day; they stood up to the elephant, prodded him and beat him on the trunk. And heroism, as it usually does, caught on, assuming curious disguises.

Some one on the sidewalk brilliantly, instantly, decided the mahout was guilty. He tore up a cobblestone, flung it and hit the mahout. It brained him. The mahout fell down beneath his charge's feet; and, having nobody to interfere with natural behavior then, the elephant screamed a last defiance and departed up the street, scattering the sacred oxen. There were lots of cobblestones. Innumerable heroes tore them up and buried the mahout, a broken mass of blood and bones, beneath a mid-street cairn.

"The rajah's elephant!" yelled some one.

NO PRIEST offering to stop that dangerous assertion of a plain truth, tumult took it up and tossed it to the roofs, where women yelled it to and fro until a quarter of a city knew the rajah had deliberately sent an elephant to wreck the chariot of Kali. The remainder of the city, pardonably swift to magnify a rumor, took to cover and put up shutters, shouting that machine guns, manned by the rajah's sepoys, had begun a massacre. And Copeland, with his coat off, set a leg or two and bound up bruises that miraculously were the only irreligious damage the elephant had done.

They were covering Kali's fallen image with a huge sheet, to await the privacy of darkness.

In the front seat of the Ford car fat babu and slender villager engaged in argument.

"But you said you could use me. Therefore, do it. I will tell you nothing," said the villager, "until your Honor guarantees employment. I will prove to you what a father and mother of brains your servant is. I am a good one. Write me on the roll and pay me."

"I will kick you in the teeth unless you answer!"

"Nay, I have a new knife. See it. I remember now that Hawkesy said I am to have his overcoat. But that is in the howdah, and the elephant is spilling things, so probably the priests will take it."

"I will take you to the *kana,*" said the babu.

"Nay, nay! That is where the constabeels are. I have had enough of that tribe."

"Very well, then, tell me—where is Hawkesy?"

"How do I know? Am I God that I should know it? All I know is that a constabeel accused him on the way of having slain that other plainclothes constabeel, who tried to slay your Honor in the darkness. Lo, they had the body with them and they would have taken Hawkesy to the *kana;* but I told them the priests had done it, so they let us continue our journey. And Hawkesy promised me the overcoat."

"And then what?"

"Why, later we came to the river. But the elephant would not swim the river, though I took him by the trunk and tried to make him do it."

"Did you push him?" asked the babu.

"Certainly I did. I pushed him in. But out he came again, the coward. And then Hawkesy rode off looking for a bridge, although I warned him about jungle devils."

"Did you ride with him?" asked the babu.

"Nay, not I. I went and did a little *puja* to the gods, to keep the devils from Hawkesy. I made a little image of an elephant, in mud. It took a long time, because I wanted no mistake about it; it must not be like a cow, or like a horse, or like a common elephant. It must resemble that one. As I say, it took a long time. So the devils got Hawkesy."

"How so?"

"It was the fault of the mud. It was too wet. I had finished the elephant and set down a fire in front of him. And I had finished the mahout and set him on the beast's neck. So both of them were all right. But when I started the image of Hawkesy, gun and all, the wet mud would not stick together. And before I knew it, back they came, the ele-

phant and the mahout, with no less than a thousand devils chasing them—although they had no need to fear the devils, because that part of the *puja* was attended to."

"And Hawkesy?"

"The mahout said that a tiger got him."

"Do you think he was telling the truth?" the babu asked.

"No. All mahouts are liars. That one lies dead yonder, doubtless because of the lies he told."

"Why don't you think he was telling the truth?"

"Because he waited at the ford for Hawkesy. He pretended that his elephant was weary. But I know, by the way he sat all night and watched, that he expected Hawkesy to come any minute. What I think is, that the devils tempted Hawkesy far into the jungle, and that is the last you will ever hear of him. They could not tempt the elephant and the mahout, because I had finished their part of the *puja*. However, Hawkesy had promised me the overcoat. Undoubtedly that elephant has run back to the lines, so I had better go now and claim the overcoat before some thief steals it."

"I will find it for you," said the babu. "Get into the back seat." Then he shouted in English to Copeland, "Doctor sahib! Do you stop a forest fire by putting out the match that lighted it? You are a reincarnation of Nero—you are setting legs while Rome burns! Incidentally you rob the local leeches of a fat fee. You will hear from the union!"

BUT Copeland was already face-to-face with that. He had been violently shoved away from one case. Two good splints that he had improvised with commandeered umbrellas had been pulled off and the bandages, made from the victim's turban, had been thrown into the gutter. Men of the victim's own sub-caste had carried him away for treatment by a ritually clean incompetent; and other victims, not yet carried off, were calling to their friends to come and rescue them before the foreigner could touch them with pollution.

"Oh, to hell with them!" said Copeland. "How can you help such fools?" He climbed into the front seat, pitched his bag beside the villager and reached into his pocket for tobacco. "Where now? Who's your new friend?"

"To the palace," the babu answered. "And the son of untruth on the back seat is the guide who is to lead you into mischief. Luckily you can't talk to each other; there will be trouble enough without that."

He began to drive as furiously as the flat tires permitted him, taking short cuts through the crowded, winding streets toward the central rectangular part of the city. There was mob rule in the making—leaderless as yet, but ominous enough to terrify the police, who were conspicuous by their absence; they had concentrated in the *kana*, where they awaited orders from the palace.

Popular resentment at the outrage to the image of the goddess took its customary way of raging against anything foreign and anything modern. Cobblestones and vegetables pursued the Ford, shattered the lamps and windshield, struck the occupants; but Copeland's helmet and the babu's turban saved their heads from injury and nobody was hurt except the villager—and he not badly; he bled at the nose and wiped it on the blanket with an air of having suffered far worse inconveniences without the compensating fun of being driven, gratis, by a babu in a rich man's chariot. It was not until Copeland forced him that he lay down on the car floor and protected himself with Copeland's bedding roll and suitcase.

But the worst came in the great square, where the palace sepoys, hurriedly reenforced from the barracks, had been lined up two deep to protect the gilded iron railing and the great gate. Their commanding officer looked fierce enough to eat his own revolver, and the bearded sepoys—bayonets already fixed—were in the nervous state that leads to massacre or rout, whichever accident determines, or whichever the leader's nerves may set in motion.

Swarming in the square, the hoarse crowd yelled and imprecated, fearful of the bayonets and perfectly aware that

one word might direct a volley into them, but urged on from the rear, where bullets were less likely to reach loud lunged agitators and the streets offered ready escape. Copeland advised discretion.

"Isn't there a back door to the palace, if you feel you have to go there?"

But the babu glanced up at the lowering sky and shouted back, between the honkings of his horn:

"There is a time for meekness, and a time for being insolent. I think, too, that the gods will save these imbeciles!"

He honked into the crowd. It made way. At the top of his lungs he shouted:

"From the Residency! Let pass some one from the Residency!"

That bluff worked half a minute. A lane widened. But the sweaty faces glowered. Teeth flashed. Eyes glared. And then some one shouted *"Bande Mataram*—Hail Motherland!"—the war-cry of the self-determinists who want an end in India of all things British, influence in native states included. Some one with a long stick struck at Copeland's helmet, and the officer on horseback at the great gate saw it. He shouted. He drew his saber. He turned in the saddle to bark a command at his men.

The babu gave the engine all the gas he dared, and above the din of that—above the mob yell—sudden as a thunder-clap a volley from a hundred rifles ripped into the air above the crowd's heads. Then the gods got busy.

"Thought so!" said the babu.

Down the rain came. It was as if the bullets had shattered a firmament. A deluge, driven by a gusty wind, smote slanting in the faces of the crowd and scattered them as if their angry gods had opened on them with artillery. The lightning sizzled through the rain. It thundered. And in sixty seconds one whole company of drenched, but relieved and scornful, sepoys stared across a streaming pavement at a solitary, flat tired, battered Ford that skidded crazily toward them, honking for the gate to open.

"Quick! Am I a fish?" Chullunder Ghose asked.

The commanding officer, proud on his high horse, but peevish because the rain was pouring down his neck and chilling his spinal column, rammed his saber back into the scabbard and motioned the babu away with the flat of his hand. He ignored Copeland. To explain that volley would be trouble enough without adding to it by an altercation with a foreigner.

"I bring a doctor for his Highness," said the babu.

"I know nothing of an illness."

"Does the rajah have to ask you for permission to be sick?" Chullunder Ghose retorted. "Do you think your haughty ignorance will save him from a deathbed?"

"Go away, I tell you."

"Very well then, stick that saber into me and take the consequences. Or command a volley. One more like the last one should improve the rajah's headache. It should sweeten his Highness's temper."

"Where is your authority?"

"Where yours is—under a wet towel in the rajah's bedroom. And the towel will catch fire unless they change it very frequently. Already I am late. But I would rather be me than you when I have told who kept me waiting."

THE commanding officer decided on a middle course, ungraciously. He faced about and ordered two men to mount the running-boards and go with the Ford to the front door.

"Then, if they are not admitted, bring them back to me and I will show them the guardroom door from the inside."

The gate swung open, and Chullunder Ghose drove honking around the drive to the pretentious portico, where insolent retainers lolled in heavy overcoats and scowled at such an insult as a Ford car.

"Tradesmen to the back door!"

The bayoneted escort took their cue and ordered the babu to drive on. But he stopped the engine and was out on the palace steps too quickly for them.

"Idiots! Did you hear that shooting? I am from the Residency. Go and tell his Highness that unless he sees me instantly a telegram will be sent to British India for troops to quell the insurrection!"

Even palace flunkies understood the dire significance of that threat. The arrival of a single company of British infantry would mean political extinction as a state—and that would mean the end of perquisites. So a man fled up the steps and the babu followed, placidly ignoring the command to wait. He followed through the front door; he was too heavy and powerful for the attendant to slam it shut in his face.

"You forget me," he said with a grin. "I am the broker, not the money-lenders. Kiss yourself on both cheeks with the compliments of Mother Kali."

But the impetus of impudence was almost spent by that time and they kept him waiting in the hall. He gave his name to the attendant. Three inhospitable looking stalwarts stood and glowered at him, while another vanished to inform the rajah who it was who dared to crave an audience. Their ominous scowling made the babu nervous; he was suffering reaction from his own enthusiasm, and the longer he waited the worse he became—until the chimes of a grandfather clock nearly startled him out of his skin.

Then suddenly and very rudely he was beckoned to the rajah's presence by a man whose servile nature parroted his master's mood. He even parroted the silence—imitated the sneer and the nod of the autocratic head that had assented to the babu's being haled into the presence.

Down a corridor as gloomy as the morgue with mildewed tapestry the babu followed the attendant to a room that the rajah described as his office. It was very plainly furnished and reserved for visitors whose social standing was of much less note than their importance. On the wall that faced the plain oak desk there was a portrait of Queen Victoria, bearing her autograph. It had been made in one of her less amiable moments; and a small crown, at a saucy angle, indicated that she knew her onions, although she might have been offended at the phrase.

"You swag bellied scoundrel! What do you want of me?" the rajah asked.

"Magnificence, I need an elephant."

With his hands to his forehead the babu bowed as meekly as a tradesman asking ten times what a jewel for the last new favorite was worth.

The rajah struck the desk.

"May devils with a set of jaws at both ends bite you in the liver!" he exploded. "If I had a thousand elephants, you shouldn't have one."

"But the thousand-and-first? I beg the Presence to begin to count at that end. If the priests should let me have an elephant—"

"Pah! Try them!"

"I should need to persuade them, no doubt, by informing them of what I know."

"Eh? What? You rotten spy! And what do you propose to tell them?"

"It would need to be something serious," said the babu, "since they know so much already. All I need is just one elephant, for one week—"

"Week, you raging imbecile? I tell you, not for one hour!"

The rajah opened the middle drawer of the desk. He drew out a revolver—a little beauty, all mother of pearl and nickel plate. Then he rested his elbow on the desk and covered the babu, glaring at him.

"Now then, tell me why you're here, and what you think you know, or go out down the main drain!"

"Did the main drain swallow Syed-Suraj? I am sure your Highness would have shot me first thing, if it were not risky. Did the main drain swallow all your Highness's slightly rash remarks about the British? It is said that others than the priests have overheard them. It is said, too, that your Highness's cousin's health is—"

With the butt of the revolver on the desk the rajah dinned him into silence.

"You accuse me, do you? And is that what brought you to Kutchdullub? You abominable traitor, are you sent to inform against me, and to find excuse for getting rid of me in order to enthrone my cousin?"

"Is the Presence dreaming?" asked the babu.

"Tell me why you want that elephant."

"To save your Honor's honor!"

"What the devil—?"

"If the Presence will believe a desperately hurried babu, I am sent to do

the diametrically opposite of what the Presence honors me by hinting that I might be trusted to attempt. A little meditation might convince your Highness that the British Raj, if it should wish to bring about your abdication, hardly would entrust that task to such a person as myself."

"You lie, you fat hog!"

"If I should reveal a secret, will the Presence not betray me?"

"I will blow your brains out unless you tell me all you know, you viper!"

"Then I must tell. You are murdering your cousin. You have murdered Syed-Suraj. By refusing to destroy a tiger you have murdered many of your subjects, for the sake of making a dilemma for the priests. I am afraid that you have sent my good friend Hawkesy to his death. And you have tried to murder me. But I am sent to save a scandal."

The rajah grinned.

"And you propose to do it? How?"

He tapped the desk with the revolver.

"I intend to send a man to shoot that tiger. That is why I need an elephant."

"And—"

"If I forgive you the attempt to have me murdered—"

"Impudent scoundrel! You slew one of my men!" said the rajah. "You told a villager to say a priest had done it. You shall hang for that as sure as I sit here!"

"But—" the babu pointed an accusing finger—"you will let me have that elephant, or I will let you abdicate! And you shall die in prison in the Andamans, where they will neither give you champagne nor expensive women. Shoot me—go on, shoot me! I am unimportant. I am only the one person who can save you from enforced abdication."

"Curses on your black soul!" said the rajah. "If I thought I could trust you—"

"You can't trust any one," the babu answered. "My employers trust me. That is all you can depend on. It is your luck that they don't want any scandal. They have sent me to preserve them from the deep embarrassment of forcing you to abdicate at this time when political strain is too severe already. You can no more trust me than I trust you. But you can use your judgment. Have the whisky and the women left you any?"

"Damn you!"

"Do I get the elephant?"

"When?"

"Now!"

"Do you mean you are for me, not against me?"

"I am dead against you. But I have my orders to save you from the Andamans. Do I get the elephant?"

"Yes."

"Give the order."

"It is dangerous to treat me impudently," said the rajah.

"Is it?" asked the babu, bulging out his stomach. "I am fat from too much danger that has never happened!—so hurry up. Unless I have an elephant in fifteen minutes—"

"Twenty," the rajah answered. With an air of bitter resignation he returned the nickel plated weapon to the drawer. "It will take twenty minutes to get him saddled. Wait here."

"While you set a trap for me?" said the babu. Then he fired the shot he had been saving all that while—his real ammunition. "Oh, if only you had royal courage! But you have not. So I must get your cousin from a sickbed to destroy that tiger. But that is not all of it. Afterward, I must explain it away and somehow make you out a hero. I will have to do my best about it."

Then he hurried from the rajah's presence.

CHAPTER XIV

"This death is far more terrible!"

BEHIND Hawkes was light from the fire he had built. His flashlight showed him a hole in the wall, down which the inscrutable woman slid, heels first; and it showed him her head at the foot of the hole, when she landed on something firm and waited for him. He switched it off then, in order to spare one hand for his rifle and the other for groping. He could slide in the dark, and he did. But when he switched it on again before reaching the

bottom it made him a mark for any one who might be lying in wait for him.

Suddenly, then, he remembered he was naked from the waist up—no spare ammunition, all the extra shells were in the pocket of his coat that was waiting its turn to be dried at the fire. His curiosity, or possibly the woman's weird appearance, or her magnetism, whatever that is, had obliterated caution. He cursed and instantly decided to climb back, to get his coat and reconsider tactics. A bat flying at his face increased his eagerness. He directed his flashlight up the hole—and felt his feet seized.

He had carried his rifle muzzle upward to protect the sight, and from habit, and because the butt might come in handy to provide a purchase on the rough wall. Now there was no room to turn the weapon end for end; it was as useless as a protest in an earthquake. Worse, it occupied his right hand. And he clutched at the wall with his left hand; so he dropped the flashlight, heard it clatter downward, and the next he knew its rays were focused on him.

He was jerked out from the hole so violently that he was almost stunned when his head struck masonry; but he hung on to his rifle and his thumb snapped off the safety catch as automatically as he breathed. He could see nothing except his flashlight pointed at him. He was lying in a pool of white light on a black floor—onyx, black marble—something smooth and slippery; and he discovered that his feet were in a noose. He sat up suddenly and was equally suddenly jerked to his back. Somebody snatched his rifle and twisted it out of his grip. Whoever that was, whispered:

"Sorry to be so rough, sahib. Take it easy."

Good plain English! But the noose around his feet was plainer than a hint, too. So was the butt of his own beloved .577, poised in the path of the flashlight, over his nose and near enough to explain exactly what it meant. He saw now that the woman held the flashlight; but the rope that held his feet went taut into the black beyond her.

He who held the rifle set a knee on Hawkes's neck and pinned him to the hard floor, forcing him to writhe to one side to avoid suffocation. He raised his hands to strike at the knee, or to seize and twist it. Both hands instantly were caught and drawn tight in another noose. The pressure on his neck ceased, but his hands were pulled over his head and he lay stretched like a felon awaiting the rack. He was as angry as a noosed gorilla; but he was curious, too. He had bumped his head, but why in thunder had they been so thoughtful not to hurt him worse than that? And why the devil did the woman stand there saying nothing?

He began to be drawn, on his back, by the feet. Whoever had charge of his hands kept that rope taut enough to make struggling useless. As he passed the woman she spat on him. Suddenly then the torch was snatched out of the woman's hand and switched off. He heard a blow that sounded as if the woman's arm had struck some one, and he heard a knife go slithering along the floor. After that he was dragged in great haste, scraped around a corner, down some steps, where the man behind him raised him by the shoulder, presumably to save him from being skinned on the stone treads, and then carried by the two men through a door. He heard it slam behind him.

"Sahib," said a voice, "we thank you in the name of our employer."

"What for?"

Sullenness was melted by astonishment; Hawkes could not keep his tongue still.

"That you let us avoid the wrath of our employer."

"Who's he?"

"He insisted we are not to hurt you. Did we?"

"Damn your eyes, who is he?"

"But he ordered us to seem to be your Honor's enemies, in order that your Honor may assist us."

"Turn a light on."

"But we are to warn your Honor not to use the rifle—not yet."

"Strike a light, I tell you. Let me up, damn it!"

"Babu Chullunder Ghose said also that your Honor is depended on to listen to us two and not be angry with us."

"What's his number?" Hawkes asked.

"C-3."

"What's yours?"

"We are F-11 and F-15."

"All right, I'll listen to you. But if you've hurt my rifle—"

"Take it, sahib. It is unhurt."

THE spokesman switched on the flashlight that he had snatched from the woman in passing. He grinned.

"She had a knife under her goatskin, but I knew it. Slash your throat and feed you to the tiger too soon—that was her idea. But I tricked her. And now I shall have to persuade her all over again."

Hawkes stood up, kicking his feet free from the noose. He examined his rifle.

"What d'you mean by too soon?" he demanded.

Then he stared at the two men dressed in yellow smocks, their hair a mass of yellow clay. They looked like religious pilgrims; on their foreheads was the ocher signature of Kali's chosen. They were worshipers of Death, if signs meant anything. One of the men was lighting a hurricane lamp in a corner. As soon as it was properly alight the other man switched off the flashlight.

"Let us save that. We shall need it. She—that woman—knows you are the rajah's agent. She supposes you have come to kill her tiger. She would have knifed you, if we hadn't coaxed her to reserve you for a special offering to Kali. We persuaded her that there would certainly be trouble unless the tiger kills you in the open and it looks like accident. And we agreed to tie you, and then loose you in the tiger's way some evening. But you see what she is; she can't wait. She's a bad one."

"Why not noose her then, the same as you did me?" Hawkes asked him. "Drag her to Kutchdullub. Chuck her in the clink. I'll interview her tiger. Let me get my eye on him at fifty or a hundred—"

"Steady, sahib! He who sent us is an artful person. If we take this woman to the *kana*, who can prove anything against her? But it will prove to the priests that we are their enemies; and the priests will prove it to the people, who will riot. One priest is a better liar than a hundred lawyers, and a lawyer is no duffer at it, God knows. They will turn lies loose against us like a swarm of hornets. And the worst is, they will say the British have a hand in it. They will say that the British are aiming plots at their religion, we being men of the C.I.D, which is a British agency. It would be true; and the truth is deadly dangerous, except from one friend to another."

Hawkes stared at the fellow's straight nose and at his hungry, fierce eyes; they were fierce with savage laughter.

"If you couldn't see a joke, you'd be a damned keen killer on your own hook, I'll bet! What's the game now?"

"Sahib, wait for C-3. He and we are mice that nibble at the thread by which a sword is hanging over some one."

"Politics, eh?" Hawkes scorned the word; he never used it except as an insult.

"Nay, sahib, not so. Politics is talk, of which there is already too much. We—we nibblers at the thread—say nothing and rob no one."

Hawkes hated mysteries. He had a .577 that he felt could easily solve this one.

"C-3 wanted me to find out how they get a man-killer to come back when they call him. How's it managed?" he asked.

"We will show you, sahib."

"Any priests here?" Hawkes asked.

"No, not priests, but devotees, such as we are supposed to become when the spirit overcomes and overwhelms us. Do you understand that?"

"No," he answered sulkily.

He did not wish to understand it. But as thieves delight in teaching thieves, and scientists delight in teaching scientists, the C.I.D. exists because its members passionately love their art and teach it, as if it might be music, to whoever has the approval of a master of their guild.

"It is the same as Thuggee, sahib. Thuggee was a religion. A religion never dies; it takes other forms. The British set the C.I.D. to wipe out Thuggee; its devotees, who slew by stealth for the sake of slaying, saw the shadow of the gallows. They might love death but

they loved not that death; so they sought another way of worship. This one. It is like the death beneath the wheels of Juggernaut. And it is also like the death of Sattee. Only this is far more dreadful."

"And they like it dreadful?" Hawkes asked.

"Drama, sahib! They are unlike the little weaklings, who go in gangs and flatter one another. They are like lone criminals, on whom a spirit of crime has cast its shadow; or like great conquerors, on whom the breath of war has breathed. They achieve aloofness and aloneness. And the drama they devise is for themselves alone. It is not crime or conquest that they serve, or profit; and it is not fame they seek, or justice. Neither is it pride. And they are not mad—not as common madmen are. They see crime, or they see death as a drama; and themselves its climax. Slay, then be slain; it is all one."

"They may kill 'emselves for all of me," said Hawkes.

"And why not, sahib? But the C.I.D. must grapple with the brainy ones who turn such drama to their own ends."

Hawkes spat. He reached for his pipe and tobacco, remembered again that he had no coat on, and swore irritably. Then he answered:

"Out o' my line. I'm not C.I.D. I like to give and take above the belly-band. To hell with sneaking in and out o' holes."

"But if the secrets are in holes? You shall look at this one, sahib."

F-11 signed to F-15, who took the lantern and led downward into smelly darkness, by a flight of stone steps in the thickness of a wall whose seams not even an earthquake had been able to enlarge. There was a silence that Hawkes's boots shattered with Fusilier tramp on the masonry.

"Where's that woman?" he demanded.

"You shall see her, sahib. I must tie your hands now."

No less suddenly than Thugs used to whip their scarfs around the throats of victims, F-11 noosed Hawkes's arms. F-15 had snatched the rifle from his hand and he was pinioned before he could start to resist.

"It must not be forgotten, sahib, that a death awaits your Honor. It is by your Honor's death that we two may achieve the ecstasy that shall prepare us also for the embrace of Kali."

Hawkes grinned while he gritted his teeth.

"Are these blokes fooling me?" he wondered. "They could have learned those numbers. Am I for it?"

He could feel the gooseflesh rising on bare skin. The stench of a charnelhouse sickened him.

"Maybe they've been counter-spying on the babu."

He began to think about his mother and sisters. They would go on the dole if he died. His insurance was only a hundred pounds.

CHAPTER XV

"Tiger!"

THERE was a goatskin on a shelf of masonry. F-15 used it to cover the lantern, and then it was pitch-dark except for the ruby glow on his knuckles where the bail just topped the goatskin. So it felt like following a dead man's hand—into the morgue at midnight. Or a graveyard. Or a pit where paupers' corpses lie awaiting God's worms.

The abominable stench grew sharper as a passage curved around the roots of broken columns, amid débris over which Hawkes stumbled. There was only a glimpse now and then of a column lying prone beneath the wreck of a colossal roof—until the glimpses presently became a dim reality, and suddenly the passage opened on a segment of gallery, on which about a dozen tiny clay lamps flickered.

There had been a balustrade around the gallery, but that had fallen. Perched around the edge, beside the little lamps, sat humans, chins on knees, like vultures at a Parsee charnel-tower. And the stench came upward, from a darkness that suggested death made solid. The little grease-fed, smoky flames around the gallery resembled yellow tongues that sought to slake undying thirst.

The human vultures glanced uneasily, as vultures on a roof do, at the sound of

Hawkes's boots on the masonry. Then they resumed their vigil, staring downward. F-11 whispered, so Hawkes sat, between him and F-15, with his knees tucked under him; but they sat like the others, chin on knees, with their arms around their shins. The gallery was only three feet wide; Hawkes set his back against the wall and shuddered. It would be easy for his guides to seize him, one on either hand, and shove him over. He could almost feel himself go. He shut his eyes—then opened them and forced himself to stare into the dark, polluted silence.

Then he saw eyes. They were green. They were not, they were red—no, green; no, one was green and one red. They were both green. They were moving. Up and down a trifle; then from side to side and back again—as much as twenty feet each way—faster and then slower. They were deep down somewhere, and no guessing how near. Fifty—a hundred—a hundred and fifty feet away . . . No, fifty. And they seemed to be in midair. But they were too big for a bird's eyes; and never a bird flew as that one did. They were enormous. No, they were not; they were yellow, and they shrank. They were two of the lamp flames mirrored on stagnant water. But they vanished. And there they were again as big as ever, moving sidewise; emerald, then blue-green. Much more swiftly they were moving.

Silence split so suddenly that Hawkes's heart checked, then hammered on his ribs. It was neither a growl nor a whine nor a snarl, but all three, ending in a harsh cough.

"Tiger!"

Now he recognized them; tiger's eyes, weird in darkness, made that way by nature to confuse all others. And it was easier to guess, now that he knew what they were. They were thirty feet down, and twice that much distant, moving to and fro behind a barrier of some sort; but he could only imagine the barrier. They were catching the light from the tiny clay lamp.

In the gruesome stillness suddenly Hawkes heard a footfall. It was heavy, careless; something rolled away as if kicked. It sounded unlike stone. And then there was light—a little blaze of tinder, leaping into crimson as a resinous torch caught fire. It was the woman. She was perched on a broken column, seated, slightly above Hawkes's level, to one side of a circular pit, whose roof consisted of a mass of fallen masonry supported by its own dead weight against surrounding walls.

She shook the torch. Amid the leaping shadows, thirty feet beneath him as he stared, Hawkes saw human ribs, skulls, thigh bones, scattered amid fallen débris; then a tiger and tigress, she behind a barrier of upright stone bars, rubbing herself against them, as if fawning on the male. He stood as close as he could get to her, magnificent and startled, staring up at the torch. He blinked at the light. He snarled and showed his eyeteeth.

His tail twitched, in and out of shadow. He crouched. He slunk away toward the dark mouth of a tunnel, turned around a shapeless heap of masonry and changed his mind; turned back again and stared up at the broken gallery—then coughed and sprang like lightning at the column on which the woman sat. His leap fell short of her by twenty feet. He tried it three times. Then he slunk back to the tigress, who was frantic; she was flowing back and forth behind the stone bars like a shadow with emerald eyes.

No one had moved, stirred, or spoken. On the segment of the broken gallery that solemn audience sat still like vultures that await death. Whose? Hawkes struggled to release his arms, but F-11 heard him and whispered—

"Not yet!"

Then Hawkes pressed his back against the wall so hard that it tortured his pinioned elbows; but the pain was better than the too near edge of that railless gallery. When F-11 moved a little closer to him he set his teeth—shrank. Pride would not let him cry out, but he felt already the appalling vertigo of falling into dark space. He began to pray for guts with which to face it.

Suddenly the blood came coursing through his veins again like an electric current. Sound as vibrant as a file on brass so struck the silence that it seemed to make the very silence throb

with anger. It was the hag. She was singing. And never in battle, or in the ambulances where the stricken screech their greeting to the jaws of hell, or in the jungle when the python steals on victims in the night, had Hawkes heard such a pæan to the gods of Horror. And the human vultures in a row around the ledge, between the little yellow lamp flames, chanted flat, monotonous responses to her litany of death.

In ended, in a silence in which nothing stirred except a skull that rolled out of a shadow where the tiger's eyes shone in the torchlight. Then the hag struck a gong and the tiger crept into view, as if he knew that signal. Some one at the far end of the gallery—without a word or gesture that betrayed emotion—set his thumb deliberately on the little flame beside him, stood up leisurely as if he yawned at what was coming, raised both arms above his head, swayed slowly and then, soundless, let himself go, feet first, down into the dark pit.

He fell with a thud amid bones and débris. There was no other sound, except a slight one as he writhed in shadow. Hawkes's pulse beat a hundred times before the tiger leaped like tawny lightning through a zone of torchlight. Then a guttural growl—thud—scrunch, as teeth went home into a man's neck. Silence.

CHAPTER XVI

"I'd like a friend to betray me."

CHULLUNDER GHOSE spent twenty minutes in the elephant stables, and then ran hurrying through the rain to Copeland, who sat smoking his pipe in the Ford. The babu spoke excitedly:

"Kindly believe nothing unless I tell you. As for instance, do you see an elephant? It is one! Ride it—now, immediately. The mahout will set a ladder for you; climb it. Don't forget the rifle and the little black bag. The villager shall carry up your bedding, but don't let him appropriate it. I will tell the villager where to go, and where to wait for me. If the mahout refuses to obey him, beat both of them with the butt end of your rifle and then beat the elephant—since that will cause the elephant to run, and the mahout to make the best of it; and it will make that villager believe you know what you are doing."

"Maybe it's as well I don't know?"

"*Verb. sap,* sahib! Sappier and verbier than you guess! Hurry! Hurry!"

It would have been hard to persuade Copeland not to ride the elephant, in the holiday mood in which he found himself. It was a monster of a beast that swayed into the rain around the palace wall and halted beneath the portico. The howdah had canvas weather curtains and enough enameled woodwork to suggest that, at the very least, a royal favorite was being sent for a ride in the rain to cool her disposition. Copeland climbed the ladder, drew the curtains and reached for his pipe.

"O.K. with me." He chuckled.

Chullunder Ghose watched the villager climb up with Copeland's luggage, then beckoned him down and took away the ladder.

"Run away," he ordered.

"Why?"

"You are a liar, a thief, a murderer, a greedy fool, a treacherous and dirty minded ingrate, and a devil destined to be reborn in the belly of a worm. Besides, I don't trust you."

"But you like me," said the villager, "and that is why you take advantage of me. What now?"

"Run and fetch a man I can trust."

The villager turned his back and ran into the rain. He turned again and ran back.

"This is he! And now what?"

"This fellow looks like a talker," said the babu.

"Uh-uh! This one's name is Silent Shadow!"

"Are you deaf and dumb?"

"Yes."

"Then you can't hear me tell you to lead this elephant to the grain barns that belong to Ram Dass, and to wait for me there. So you can't tell any one I told you what to do. But do it."

"The mahout might not obey me."

"He is not deaf. I am not dumb. He will obey me; otherwise the sahib in the howdah will instruct him with the butt end of a rifle."

"Is he such an one, that sahib?"

"He is such an one. He cuts out livers. He extracts eyes. He cuts off noses. Legs and arms are so much trash to him; he mows them off. He can make a man unconscious in a moment, and the man may wake up with a noseless, blind head on a legless, armless body—and no liver, either. That is the exact truth, so observe a careful attitude toward him."

"Certainly. Your Honor means the barns of Ram Dass that are on the outskirts of the city eastward from here? Very well. I am dumb. You had better command the mahout to tell his elephant to pick me up and set me in the howdah."

"You will walk," said the babu.

"In this rain?"

"And being a silent shadow, you will observe whoever follows. If you speak to nobody until you see me—under any provocation, mind you; and if, when I give you leave to speak to me, your speech is satisfactory to me, I may consider you for permanent employment."

"Don't doubt I will satisfy you. Let me have a little money for my victuals."

"You shall eat, at my expense, when I eat. Lead on."

"*Atcha!* By the size of your Honor's belly, I believe you eat good food and plenty of it."

Chullunder Ghose aimed a kick at him to get him started. Then he ordered the mahout to follow the villager and called up to Copeland to beat the mahout if he should disobey the villager's signs.

"And if any one asks you questions, say you are the Residency doctor, temporary, just come out for a look at the scenery. They won't believe you; but they wouldn't believe you if you told the truth."

Copeland laughed.

"They'd have to search me. I don't know the truth."

"Nobody does," said the babu. "You shall see me when you see me. So long."

THE elephant swayed away majestically, and the babu got into the flat tired Ford. He drove out through the palace gate and hurried through deserted streets toward the marketplace, abandoning the Ford when he had come as close as he could drive to the corn shop of his friend, Ram Dass. Then he hurried in search of him; found him in the back room; calmed himself and sat down on a pile of sacking; took a cigaret and smoked it to the butt in silence. Ram Dass spoke first.

"What is doing?"

"Things are going too well," said the babu. "I suspect the gods are greasing an event for me to slip on."

"There is trouble in store for all of us," said Ram Dass. "Did you ever hear of such cynical impudence as the inquest on the corpse of Syed-Suraj? Held two hours after the murder. Verdict—detected stealing, and committed suicide to avoid arrest! The corpse incinerated promptly. I believe the rajah shot him for his failure to borrow more money from me. They tell me that the rajah watched the inquest through a panel in the library wall. Some one will betray him one of these days, but in the meanwhile there is rioting and shooting. Who knows what may happen to us?"

"It is time for some one to betray me," the babu answered. "I would like a friend to do it."

Ram Dass stared at him. The babu suddenly became alert, alive, emphatic.

"Shame on you," he said, "to sit still like a peasant at a dung fire! It is men of affairs like you who bring on such calamities by your complacency."

"But what can I do?"

"You can hurry to the Residency! You can summon that lazy, incompetent Smith from his sickbed. There is nothing wrong with him but boils, and they are nothing but the product of a rotten disposition."

"What then? What am I to tell him? He has his own spies, hasn't he? What can I say that he does not know?"

"You can betray me. You can betray Hawkes," said the babu. "Thus you can betray Smith into doing something that will serve a purpose. Tell him that you know me intimately and I told you that the rioting is due to Hawkesy having gone to shoot that tiger. Also say that I told you Hawkesy is indignant because he has learned that Smith advised Syed-Suraj to send him to shoot the tiger and to

make a scapegoat of him afterward. So Hawkesy has gone to fetch the rajah's cousin to do the shooting, and that will make things much worse, because Hawkesy will certainly accuse Smith afterward; and you may say that I will back up Hawkesy. So the only thing for Smith to do is see the rajah instantly and reprimand him.

"Say you think the rajah hopes his cousin will commence a civil war in order to compel the British-Indian authorities to intervene. That will scare him. Tell him he should either hurry and shoot that tiger himself, and defy the priesthood, or else make the rajah do it. There is no other way. And then offer to lend him an elephant, in case he wants one."

"What for?"

"He will realize that if the rajah and the rajah's cousin meet there may be murder. He may wish to stop that."

"This is mystery," said Ram Dass. "It is madness."

"Any one is mad who acts with decency." The babu answered. "I am giving you a chance to save this state from a calamity. But perhaps I am mistaken in you. Possibly you, also, are the kind of person who prefers his temporary comfort to a little duty that would save a lot of people. It is true that it is raining—"

"You insult me inexcusably," said Ram Dass. "I will go and do it—not because you say it is my duty, but because the rajah owes me money and unless he is compelled to save himself I shall never get paid. I will send for a *gharri* at once to take me to the Residency."

It was not until the *gharri* drove away with Ram Dass that Chullunder Ghose returned into the rain and beckoned to the dish faced man who sat like a wayside beggar in a doorway.

"Buy bananas," he commanded. "Eat them as you run, if you are hungry. Go now to the palace. Watch. The British sahib from the Residency—you will know him by the bandage on his neck—will come and will go away again. Then, if the rajah should afterward go away by elephant, what can you set on fire?" He hesitated. "It must be a very big blaze. It should look like the work of rioters. I must be able to see it from far away. And it must kill no one. It must not inflict important hardship."

Dish face nodded.

"I can burn the place I sleep in, sahib. It stands alone in a deserted compound at the rear of the palace. It is an old wooden barn, wherein they stored the grass for elephants. But a contractor filled it full of grass no elephant would eat, and now the rats are in it, because the roof is tight and the grass dry."

"*Atcha.* Set it well alight then," said the babu. "I have given you the money for your railroad ticket. You will not see me again until we meet in Delhi."

"At the usual place?"

"Yes, if you are not shot by a rajah's watchman as you run from the burning barn. Go now—and be careful."

BUT it was the babu who was careless. He was almost sizzling with excitement as he hurried through the rain on foot toward the barn where Ram Dass kept surplus grain. Three hundred yards from the barn, with a couple of acres of muddy slums to thread his way through and the rain in his face, he was suddenly struck by a stone in the jaw as he passed a narrow alley between two disreputable houses.

"He who hits to kill hits harder," he reflected.

So he dodged into the alley whence the stone had come. There was not much more than shoulder room between the walls, and rain came pouring from the eaves on both sides, forming an ankle deep stream down the middle. There was no shelter—no cover of any kind, except the buttress of a house wall on the right hand. It projected two feet out into the alleyway. He ran toward it. Out from behind it sprang the villager who had named himself Silent Shadow. Quicker than the shadow of a rat, he knocked the babu off his balance and shoved him flat against the wall behind the buttress. Then he smote him in the belly.

"It is too big! Suck it inward! Any one who passes in the street could see it."

"Where is your elephant?"

"Where I left him, by the barn of

Ram Dass. But your Honor ordered me to watch who followed. So I noticed that the same men whom I prevented from taking that elephant away from Hawkesy—they, I mean, who found and carried in that *badmash* whom your Honor slew with my club—they four came forth from a guardroom near the palace gate and followed. They were very weary men, and they had knives and clubs and pistols. So I said to myself, they are up to no good, since nobody sends out tired men on a long chase, but to do that which weariness will urge them to do swiftly."

"Must I listen to a tale about your cleverness?"

"But I was clever, sahib! I am much the best assistant that your Honor ever found by good luck. Did your Honor not forbid me to have speech with them? So what could I do but coax them to have speech with me?"

"Very well; they spoke. And what then?"

"Only one of them spoke. The others smote me; and they twisted my arms until I had to speak. However, that was all right, and not disobedience at all, because I lied to them, and a lie is nothing. I told them that your Honor saw a woman through a window and had called to her to set a signal whenever her husband should be away from home. I said she set the signal and I saw it and informed your Honor; so your Honor hurried to the house."

"Did they believe that?"

"Yes, they presently believed it, after I had told them how your Honor wished to use that woman as a spy by getting her to talk to the *zenana* servants. So they set an ambush. There they wait, to slit your Honor's throat; but me they drove away, mistrusting me. They feared I might cry out or make a signal and inform your Honor. So I came here by way of a back street. And here I waited in all this drafty air and rain, as cold and hungry as a—"

"Where are they now?"

"Around the corner. Just around the corner of the next street."

"Very well. Now we shall see if you are fit for permanent employment. Go and tell them—and demand a fee for telling it—that you have just now seen me entering the shop of Ram Dass. If they doubt you, offer to go with them."

"But if they take me to the *kana*—"

"You will get a meal there and a dry bed. What should you care, if you sleep in a police cell? We, of our service, sometimes may serve a term in jail to hide from enemies."

There was no more speech between them, but it was as if an ax had fallen and severed the thread of the villager's interest. He nodded, but the nod was unconvincing. The natural slyness left his eyes and was replaced by a look of stolid honesty, which is a danger signal in yokels. The intangible, perhaps magnetic current that unites two men in one enthusiasm, ceased as suddenly as light switched off. The villager smiled as he walked away into the rain. If he had looked back, he might have noticed that Chullunder Ghose was also smiling.

"He was too good to be true, that villager," remarked the babu to himself. "He is the ninth or the tenth I have tested who was afraid of a cell. So—now he sells me to the constables, so what next? There are two ends to this alley."

The police might come from both ends. But to do that, two of them would have to give the other two enough time to run around the block of buildings and take up position. Nothing for it but the buttress.

"There is no time now for bad luck! O thou Lord Ganesha, lift me by the short hair! Grip same as it rises!"

It was such a buttress as an ape might clamber easily, but it was slippery with rain and not an easy climb for an athlete equipped with leg irons. For the babu it looked like stark impossibility. But he kicked off his slippers and stowed them in his waistband. Pudgy looking fingers and bare toes took a grip on cracks and the interstices of weathered bricks. Knees and elbows hugged the buttress as a vise hugs lumber, until he swung himself over a low parapet on to a flat roof and lay there listening.

Three minutes later, four men approached from opposite directions and came to a halt beneath him. One of them spoke to a fifth man.

"Well, where is he? You have lied to us, you vermin! I watched this end

of the alley."

Another man spoke.

"If that fat brute had escaped at our end, we two surely would have seen him running. There is no door here—no window. He could not have hidden. This lying *jungli* has been fooling us!"

"I have not, sahibs! I—"

"Take that, you mud-begotten toad!"

"To the *kana!* We will teach him in the *kana!*"

"In a dark cell we will teach him—"

Peering above the parapet, the babu watched them march away down the alley in single file with the villager limping in their midst.

"Another cull!" he muttered. "What a pity! He was almost all right, that one. But the tainted egg becomes a bad egg. That one will become a criminal. There is not room for a split hair between those and us; and yet the stars are nearer to the earth than they and we to one another! Too bad!"

Down he went over the parapet, and out the far end of the alley, hurrying.

"I am beholden to the god Ganesha," he reflected, "but the gods are worse than money-lenders. They collect—they collect—they collect! So why waste breath on thanks to them? And bombs don't fall twice in the same place. Good luck is just like a cold in the head; it runs for three days if it isn't squelched the first hour! Three days? I can do it, if only Hawkesy hasn't acted like a true-blue Britisher and shot my works away to save his character—or something. It will probably be something."

CHAPTER XVII

"I need a drink like Judas Iscariot!"

HAWKES, dazed and sickened, helplessly bound, with the stench of the tiger's den beneath him and the grim hag's torchlight breaking up the gloom, pressed hard against the wall for fear of falling off the ledge. Ghosts of dead men seemed to leap out from the shadows. He could hear the tiger snarling and the crunch of the brute's fangs on human flesh and bone.

The hag stood upright on her broken pillar and began to scream, waving and shaking her torch. She was as mad-drunk as ever a Roman mob became at orgies of dramatically frightful death. Her screams appeared to stir the tigress in the cage behind the stone bars; eyes that glittered in the torchlight did a dance to the measureless rhythm of the hag's chant, leaving to imagination the invisible contortions of a body yearning to glut strength in a feast of frenzy.

Both Hawkes's captors seized him by the shoulders, raised him to his feet and started back along the gallery, one leading with the shrouded lantern and the other urging from behind. He could not have been recognized by any of the others on that gallery; it had been too dark; his captors hustled him away too soon. At the end of a winding passage —not the same they came by—they descended three steps where there was a noise of running water. They passed through a door that F-11 closed and bolted. Then the other unshrouded the lantern and grinned.

"One goat a day for the tigress. But to the he-tiger they give nothing; he must hunt men!"

"Loose my arms," Hawkes ordered. "Damn it, I gave all my whisky to the elephant. I need a drink like Judas Iscariot."

F-11 unfastened his arms and chafed the places where the rawhide thong had bitten when he strained against it in his terror.

"Now the rifle."

F-11 gave it to him. There was no hint of his being a prisoner now. F-11 and F-15 grinned, disclosing teeth as yellow as their long smocks. Their eyes were as inscrutable as those of alligators. They were partners in an ugly game; as full of guile as rats, as full of ruthlessness as leopards; but they were as friendly as two good hunting dogs.

Hawkes stared up at the ceiling formed by broken vaulting, into which huge blocks of masonry had jammed themselves in falling.

"What now?" he demanded. "How do I get out o' this?"

TO BE CONCLUDED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

WHAT happens when an automatic jams, and a few other questions on fire-arms:

In *Adventure* for Feb. 15th Mr. Wiggins, in reply to a question, says revolvers can not be equipped with a silencer, and only automatic pistols up to .22 caliber.

His reasoning as to revolvers is conclusive, inasmuch as I tried once firing a revolver with the barrel resting on my bare forearm. I *know* the gas escapes. But in regard to automatics, is it impossible for, say, a .32 or .38, or merely inadvisable due to weight or some other reason?

Again, as to a plugged barrel exploding: A few years ago in South America I fired a .32 Colt automatic at a deer which appeared beside the trail some thirty feet off. The first shot had no effect and I fired again.

This time I killed the deer but the slide jammed about one-fourth of the way back.

I was unable to clear the jam until I reached camp. Upon examining the barrel I found it swelled at the locking lug .017 of an inch. As I could not obtain another barrel I filed the lug down to fit and used the gun until it jammed some months later.

THIS time the chambered end of the barrel had the shell minus the head inside. The shell had been driven into the rifling and it showed other positive evidence of one or more bullets having passed through. The shell was perhaps one-half an inch in from the rear. It was impossible to extract it and, as I was a bit fed up by this time, I went back to a .38 special revolver for a pocket gun.

I forgot to mention that on butchering the deer both bullets were located. One had the nose slightly flattened and the other, having struck no bone, was in fair shape.

I am positive about the shell, but have often wondered if there could have been more than one explanation for the first experience. My opinion is that the first bullet jammed in the barrel and was ejected by the second. There was one hell of a recoil!

The reason for all this is that I have seen innumerable stories where a *rifle* much more strongly built in proportion to its load, has blown out the breech, killing the firer, when plugged with snow or mud.

The ammunition I used was French (the trade name I can not remember) .32 cal. full jacketed cupro-nickel; the gun a Colt automatic pistol. I have since fired over two thousand rounds of

Standard American ammunition in the same gun with a new barrel and never had a jam or a misfire.

NOW for my questions:

1. Can a silencer be used on a .32 or .38 caliber automatic pistol of *any* make, American or foreign?

2. Can a .32 automatic pistol with a bullet lying loosely in the barrel be fired without blowing out the breech?

3. Will a .30-.30 rifle, to be specific, or a Government Springfield, explode at the breech or barrel if plugged with *dry* snow or *fluid* mud?

The discussion should be interesting.

—QUARTO OJOS

CORRESPONDENCE on a point of American Indian history:

Mimico, Ontario

In the story "The Bunglers", Mr. Hugh Pendexter writes that the Wyandots were neighbors of the ferocious Hurons. I am only sixteen years of age, and my history may not be entirely correct, but I find that the Huron Indians were peaceful; but of course I don't mean that they never fought. They did fight now and again, to protect the country against the Iroquois, who came from what is now New York State. They were in 1649 defeated in their own towns, and the few remaining Indians who escaped the slaughter sought refuge on Isle St. Joseph.

I do not know if Mr. Pendexter has any other tribe in mind, but I would feel very pleased if he could answer the question that is in my mind: Were the Hurons referred to the same that I recorded, and if so, how could they be active about the time 1800-1816, the time of the story?

—FRED MC CLEMENT

Mr. Pendexter's reply:

Norway, Maine

Your letter to the editor of *Adventure has* been turned over to me for reply. The Wyandots ("Wendat", old form of spelling) *were* Hurons. The term "Huron" is from the French *hure*—"bristly"; or from Norman French *huree*—"rugged". This term was used in England in 1358, to designate those who rebelled against the nobility. In the New World they were called Hurons as early as 1600, because of wearing their hair roached and cropped. All going back to the French *hure*—"rough hair". It was not until after 1748 that this branch of the Hurons went to Detroit and Sandusky and became known as Wyandots. (See Bureau American Ethnology, vol. 1, page 589) and secured paramount control of the Ohio Valley. Shawnee and Delaware towns were on their holdings and with their consent.

Quoting from Bulletin 30, part one, p. 590: "Supported the British against the Americans (1812 war). After the peace of 1815 they secured a large tract in Ohio and Michigan. And sold a large part of it in 1819".

IN using the term "ferocious" I referred to them only as enemies fighting enemies. The New York Iroquois were our highest type of Indians, with the Cherokee close rivals. When they fought they were *ferocious*. Else they could not have ventured far to the west to whip the Siouan tribes. Had the discovery of America by Columbus been delayed another hundred years the Iroquois would have battled with the Aztec of Mexico for the supremacy on the American continent. And all this by ferocious fighting. In fact, that term would have been accepted by any tribe in America as a distinct compliment. I do not know as I have answered your question as succinctly as you would have wished. But it's a broad subject and has many ramifications. If there is any point you wish me to comment on to greater length, I shall be pleased to do so.

—HUGH PENDEXTER

SEVERAL of you have queried Gordon Young on the nature of the mango mentioned in his story, "Scalawag". Follows a representative letter:

South Porcupine, North Ontario, Canada

We all so enjoy your stories in *Adventure*, also the Camp-fire, but feel obliged to question Gordon Young about his latest tale "Scalawag". First, what kind of a mango was Miss Malloy eating that she was able to *spoon* the fruit out, and Capt. Bill able to *spit* the *seeds* out? Are they grenadillas or pomegranates? The only mangoes I have ever eaten have had *one* seed only and that as large as a small banana, with thick membrane adhering to it, from which one bites the fruit, and the juice runs over everything. Hence the saying in the Tropics: "A bath is the only safe place in which to eat a mango."

Yours for correctness,

—MRS. E. PULLIN

The author has not had the opportunity to go into the matter in detail, but here is a brief word from him:

Los Angeles, California

Several readers wonder if there is another species of mango than they are used to. I fancy so. Mangoes in the South Seas vary from the size of plums to good sized pears; in recent years horticulturists have produced a large and luscious variety much sought for.

They don't see how a mango could be eaten with a spoon because the skin is tough. The skin can be cut, you know, and the pulp scraped—quite as well as sucked.

I don't know how many varieties of mangoes there are; but I'll bet there are twenty distinct kinds; some as I have said, small, and for Bill to clap a mango into his mouth, crush, suck and spit wasn't a very elegant way to eat, but satisfactory and meant to be in contrast to the dainty feeding with a spoon.

—GORDON YOUNG

NOT for 'fraid-cats, this game of the bayou youngsters, even if the alligators involved were not full grown bulls:

Covington, Louisiana

Fifty years ago when I was a boy down in Bayou Teche (where I was born and raised) we youngsters in swimming used to have lots of fun "circling alligators".

The *modus operandi* of this novel sport was, when we found an alligator on the surface and quiet (there were plenty of them then) twelve or fourteen of us would swim quietly out and form a circle about forty feet in diameter around him, then one of us would swim directly at him splashing a lot, and all the rest (as soon as the 'gator started) treading water and splashing too, would hold our places. The first fellow, if he succeeded, which he usually did, in getting the 'gator swimming around, would drop back in the circle in a minute or two and be relayed by another. Often we would keep him circling for ten or fifteen minutes, and I believe any one of us could have, if we dared, caught him. Eventually of course, he dived under and got out of the circle, a very much scared 'gator. I don't think he ever stopped within two miles.

Of course, these were not the big old bulls, but ranged from about four to six feet. Even in those days the alligator boats got most of the big ones.

It seemed to me that the 'gator had a lot of lost motion in his swimming, for he did almost as much splashing as we did. Possibly his fright cut down his speed and he didn't go as fast as he might have gone if he were the pursuer instead of the pursued. —F. A. FRÈRE

ON THE feasibility of a cycling tour through Africa, and one man who made one:

Castle Rock, Minnesota

Ask Adventure of February 1st carried advice that a two-man cycling trip in African wilds is practically impossible. I guess this is correct, at that. However, knowing that my friend Francis A. Flood, Travel Editor of the *Nebraska Farmer*, Lincoln, Nebraska, had made such a trip on motorcycles and *across* Africa at that, I sent the clipping to him.

This elicited a reply which is so interesting that I enclose Mr. Flood's letter herewith, for such use as you may wish to make of it. If it affords chance for a little discussion in your columns, so much the better, as we readers of *Adventure* enjoy these discussions; as for instance the old ones about Julius Caesar.

Personally I have not, I believe, missed an issue of your magazine since about 1914 and have interested many other men and boys in it since then. We regret the smaller sized issues and hope that ere long the size may be increased. Three issues a month, again, are better than two. I consider it the finest magazine published, for young or old. —PERCY C. RECORDS

Mr. Flood's letter:

Lincoln, Nebraska

Thanks for sending me the copy of *Adventure*, in which the expert states that cycling in Africa is impossible. Since you know that I have had considerable experience in that very line, I don't blame you for doubting the expert's statement, but, as a result of that same experience, I feel that the expert gave very wise advice after all.

Fortunately for the readers of *Adventure*, there are always people who will do things that they shouldn't do, things which are exceedingly contrary to all the good advice they can get—and the stories of their adventures afterwards make good reading, which we would not have if everybody followed good advice.

MY PARTNER and I were advised by all who knew anything about it that our proposed motorcycle trip from Lagos, Nigeria, on the west coast of Africa, across the continent to the Red Sea, was entirely impossible as well as entirely foolhardy. These people were entirely right, and the only reason that we started was simply because we didn't know any better. But, having started, we kept on going, and five months later we reached the Red Sea, under our own power. We had crossed some thousand miles of jungle on the west coast of Africa, a couple of thousand miles of Sahara Desert, another thousand or so of the Nile Valley and the mountainous region that sheltered it from the Red Sea, and we had made the entire journey under our own power except when we had to be towed by camels, horses, oxen, Negroes and so on.

THE expert is entirely right when he says that roads, as we know them, exist in very few places in Africa and that one can not depend on cycling along the native trails because they usually run only from town to town. But after all, if one goes only from town to town, he would eventually get across Africa, if he keeps going from the right towns to the right towns. That's what we did, although it is good advice to tell anybody else not to try the same thing.

I can differ with the expert only in one of his statements. He says "it is impossible for the white man to travel in Africa without a respectable retinue." My partner and I traveled across the entire continent without any retinue whatever except ourselves—and since we were always entirely respectable, I suppose that still makes the expert's statement true. —FRANCIS A. FLOOD

PLEASE address all communications intended for this section to "The Camp-fire", care of the magazine.

ASK *Adventure*

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Ship

NOMENCLATURE of a bygone day when the *Wanderer* went a-whaling.

Request:—"I am engaged at present in a hobby of ship models. Having a desire to be both correct and accurate, I wish to know a few things which my plans do not specify.

1. Exactly where and in what order are the buntlines, clewlines, etc. belayed. Are they ever carried to the pinrail?

2. To what point, and how, are the sheet ropes of the jibs fastened?

3. Are the sails laced to the spars, or what?

4. Capt. McCann, the man who drew the plans for the model of the boat I'm building, says to use chain for the sheets or the squaresails. As they run through several blocks, I wondered if chain would be correct?

5. What is the purpose of the span or vang?

The model is one of the whaling ship *Wanderer.*"

—LAWRENCE K. WATERBURY,
Grosse Pointe, Michigan

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—1. Buntlines and clewlines make fast at pinrail, fiferail, and monkey rail. The buntlines of the courses are usually at the monkey rail; the clewgarnets at the fiferail; the topsail (and sails above it) have their clewlines and buntlines at the pinrail, those of the higher yards abaft those below. In some ships, however, the topsail clewlines came to the fiferail, between the clewgarnets and the downhauls for the staysails on the next mast abaft. It is generally the case that, with running gear, the higher up a rope has its use, the farther aft it is belayed on deck, and clewlines forward of the buntlines of the same sail.

2. Jib sheets in the *Wanderer*—if memory serves me right—belayed the cleats along the bow bulwarks. This bark had no forecastle head, if I'm not mistaken. In the case of forecastle headed ships the jib sheet cleats of course were on the topgallant forecastle, usually on deck.

3. Sails are bent to the yards with rovings, or robands, which are usually strands of ropeyarns which thread through eyes in the sail and are fastened to iron jackstays running along the top of the yard. A sail may be laced to a gaff; but more often it ran out either on rings or on a track, hauled out by an outhaul.

4. Chain sheets are almost invariably used on square topsails, but I rather doubt if the little *Wanderer* had chain sheets on the lighter yards. As I recall her—and I was aboard her the day before she was wrecked off Cuttyhunk—she was no more than 200 or 300 tons. Where chain sheets were used, the sheaves at the yardarms were protected with iron; and the sheaves near the mast, through which the chain led down to the deck, were fitted between iron plates bolted to the under side of the yard. Lighter sails more often had wire sheets pennants with manila or hemp hauling parts.

5. The spanker vang was a steadying guy for a standing gaff, running from gaff-end to either quarter. When the spanker was set, of course, the sail held the gaff; but often a spanker was partly brailed in at the head, and then the gaff had no steadying medium except the vangs. When the spanker was stowed the gaff would swing wildly but for the vangs.

Horse

NOTES on making a peroxide blond out of a piebald.

Request:—"Will you kindly give me information on how to take manure stains off a piebald?"
—ARTHUR RUDZEWICK, Maspeth, Long Island

Reply, by Mr. Thomas H. Dameron:—Soap and water plus lots of elbow grease will remove the stains. Add ammonia to the water for best results. Almost any rubbing liniment will remove manure stains. Rubbing alcohol is also good to loosen them.

As a last resort, wash with a solution of potassium permanganate, enough to make the water deep red. This will stain the white worse than the manure, but the red can be removed by bleaching with peroxide, or with a fairly strong solution of sodium hyposulphite. The latter, however, is a bit more expensive than the peroxide.

Java

DUTCH company names rendered into English.

Request:—"Would you please give me the English equivalents of the names of the following Dutch companies operating in Java:

1. Naamlooze Vennootschap Mijnbouw en Handelschmaatschappij 'Wonoh Gedeh'.

2. Naamlooze Vennootschap Bouwmaatschappij 'Arina'.

These names appear in connection with descriptions of their activities in the oil regions of Java."
—FRANCIS ASBURY, JR., Long Beach, California

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—Here are the equivalents of the firm names you wished me to translate into English:

1. Mining & Trading Company, Inc., "Wonoh Gedeh".

2. Construction (Building) Company, Inc., "Arina".

In case you desire to communicate with either or both of these companies, use their *Dutch,* not English, appellations.

Tracer

A BULLET that leaves a trail.

Request:—"I should like to have a description of a tracer bullet. Where can they be procured?"
—CHARLES PANRUSH, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The tracer bullet was in appearance the same as the ordinary Service .30 caliber bullet, but contained a compound that ignited upon being exposed to heat, such as that generated by the gas of discharge and the friction developed by the bullet passing through the bore of the gun. A solder plug in the side of the bullet melted from this heat and friction, and the inflammable compound, being ignited, gave a trail of smoke that enabled the gunner to see where his bullets were going. They seem to have left this smoke trail for three hundred yards. They are not sold, and are a Government possession solely at present, as far as I know.

Yucatan

THE Maya Indians got their gold elsewhere, for there's none in Yucatan.

Request:—"Can you supply me with any information about mining opportunities in Yucatan?"
—J. STALKER, Toronto, Canada

Reply, by Mr. W. Russell Sheets:—Not only is there no gold to be found in all of southeastern Mexico but no other mineral—unless oil is so considered. The old Maya Indian civilization had no gold that was native to the territory. They did have some ornaments of gold and many of jade, but no one so far has been able to deduce where they got them.

Yucatan is a limestone country clear down to coral, and the only signs of mineral I ever learned of in two years with oil geologists was a chance for asbestos and certain indications of a great new oil field in a day of better government.

Snowshoes and Skis

WINTER sports. The first ski venture.

Request:—"I am at present living in the high country of Colorado. Much of the nearby territory lies above timber line; the rest is plentifully splotched with patches of fairly thick spruce and aspen. Nearly all of it is fairly precipitous, and as the Winter snows are heavy, slides are frequent.

1. For this country, should I have the tailless, bearpaw snowshoes, or a slimmer, longer tailed shoe?

2. What general dimensions and weight of lacing?

3. Do snowshoes work better with moccasins than with heeled boots?

4. And now for skis. I have seen some few in use which I should judge to average around nine feet in length, though I also know that many of the old-timers in this country used sixteen-footers. Is there any particular advantage in the use of the longer ski? Are they harder than the others to handle?

5. Would you recommend any particular make of ski?

6. Do you know of a better way to learn the use of these weapons than to get on and get going?"
—GEO. A. DAVIDSON, St. Elmo, Colorado

Reply, by Mr. W. H. Price:—1. I will first endeavor to answer your questions re snowshoes. The bearpaw models are much superior to the tailed shoes in heavy brush country. You will readily understand that in this kind of travel there are many places where it is difficult to turn a shoe 3½ or 4 feet long. The bearpaw model, however, is almost circular and will get you in and out of many places otherwise inaccessible. The fine mesh, I think, you would find most satisfactory, and any sporting goods dealer will advise you as to the size most suitable for your weight.

2. Most of the sporting goods stores stock a variety of snowshoe harness consisting of straps and buckles, but the only thing to be said in their favor is that they are easy to adjust, as well as put on and take off. Lampwick is the most widely used on account of the fact that it wears well and does not freeze.

The following outfit has been used with success. The material used is a smoke-tanned babiche made of moose, caribou or buckskin. This is pliable and usually tough. Two strips of babiche are used to attach each shoe and both ends are inserted at the side of the toe hold, one in front and one behind the reenforcing rib, and brought up on opposite sides This gives two loops under which the toe is inserted. The loop is usually knotted in such a way as to keep it of uniform size. Loose ends are then tied, after crossing them over instep and around the

ankle sufficiently tight to keep toe in exact position and at the same time not allow the thongs to slip over the heel.

3. Moccasins are the only thing to wear with snowshoes.

4, 5, 6. Now for a few words about skis. Skis manufactured by the Northland Manufacturing Company, St. Paul, Minn, can be recommended. I have been using a pair of ash skis made by this company for over ten years, and they are still going strong. One way to judge the proper length of the ski is to stand with your arm stretched at full length above your head, and the ski placed upright should be at least long enough for its tip to reach the roots of your fingers, and it may well reach a few inches beyond the finger-ends.

There is no better way to learn to ski than to get on and get going, as you say. When descending a hill always remember to keep both skis close together so that they leave a single track—one ski about a foot in advance of the other; the advanced leg almost straight at the knee, the other slightly bent—nearly all the weight on the back foot. The inside of the front knee should be pressed against the knee cap of the other; body erect and arms hanging easily by the sides.

Reptile

SNAKE-BITE under water.

Request:—"1. Can a snake bite in water?

2. Can a snake strike without coiling?

3. What is good for feeding rattlesnakes in captivity?

—ALFRED CHENEY, JR., Kinston, North Carolina

Reply, by Mr. Karl P. Schmidt:—1. Yes, a snake can strike or bite in water. Many snakes live in water and eat fish.

2. Snakes can strike without coiling or any other preparation.

3. Captive rattlesnakes may be fed freshly killed mice or rats.

A Swimming Mailman

TIN can dispatch from Niuafoo'u to steamer.

Request:—"Do you know of any one by the name of Fotofile, Niuafoo'u Island, Tonga, Samoa? I recently read in a stamp paper about tin can mail being dispatched by swimmer to steamships with tin can attached to his back and each envelop marked accordingly. I go in for these unique covers and wondered, since your location is so near to Samoa—on the map—whether you might give me this information."

—HARRY V. GERHARDT, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Wm. McCreadie:—I am sorry to inform you that owing to a native being badly mauled by a shark some time ago a canoe is being used now, so far as my latest information goes. As a matter of fact, I tried to get a "cover" myself, but failed. As, however, the captain of the local steamer tells me the weather only allows a canoe to be launched for six months—since there is no harbor—there may be a chance if you write Postmaster, Niuafoo'u, Tonga. Samoa is quite a distinct group and separate government.

The Ask Adventure section on Old Songs is now vacant. Readers who feel that they are fully qualified to cover this section, comprising American folk songs, also cowboy songs, sea chanteys, railroad and army songs, et cetera, are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure,* 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelop and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*, APRIL 15th

STRANGERS of the AMULET

By GORDON MacCREAGH

"I SEE blood on the trail. White men will die. Only the strong magic of the lion dance may help you."

King, American adventurer, heard these words of the old witch-doctor, and clamped his teeth. For him Africa had no secrets. And the dire prophecy (in which he believed) meant either a threat from the enemy safari that was dogging his trail, or a warning against the men of mystery he was seeking, into whose borders no stranger had ever gone and returned . . .

Begin this exciting two-part story by the author of "The Lost End of Nowhere" in this issue.

And These Other Good Stories

DOUBLE SQUEEZE, a story of gold rush days in Alaska, by STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS; SNOW IN THE PASS, a story of hazardous railroading, by WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES; ANANIAS, a humorous story of the sea, by R. V. GERY; SQUAW PIG, a story of the Indian reservations, by STANLEY VESTAL; THE RUNAWAY, a story of the Alabama back-country, by HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS; and conclusion of C.I.D, a story of the British Secret Service in India, by TALBOT MUNDY.

ILLUSION: Oriental girl reclines on a sheet of plate glass supported by two slaves. Magician waves white sheet...pronounces few magic words ...Presto! She has *disappeared* in thin air.

EXPLANATION: One of the "slaves" is a *hollow dummy*. When the magician holds up the sheet the lithe little lady disappears completely—into his empty figure.

Copyright, 1933, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company

IT'S FUN TO BE FOOLED ...IT'S MORE FUN TO KNOW

Here's a time-honored trick used in cigarette advertising. It is called "Coolness."

EXPLANATION: Coolness is determined by the speed of burning. *Fresh* cigarettes burn more slowly... smoke cooler. *Dried-out* cigarettes taste *hot*. Camels are cooler because they come in the famous Humidor Pack of seamless 3-ply, Moisture-Proof cellophane...and because they contain *better tobaccos*.

It is a fact, well known by leaf tobacco experts, that Camels are made from finer, more expensive tobaccos than any other popular brand.

Smoke Camels...let your taste sense the difference.

No Tricks — just Costlier Tobaccos

IN A MATCHLESS BLEND